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THE
STING OF THE ADDER

A TEMPERANCE TALE

OF

THRILLING INTEREST.

BY ALBERT WALKER.



The Sting of the Adder

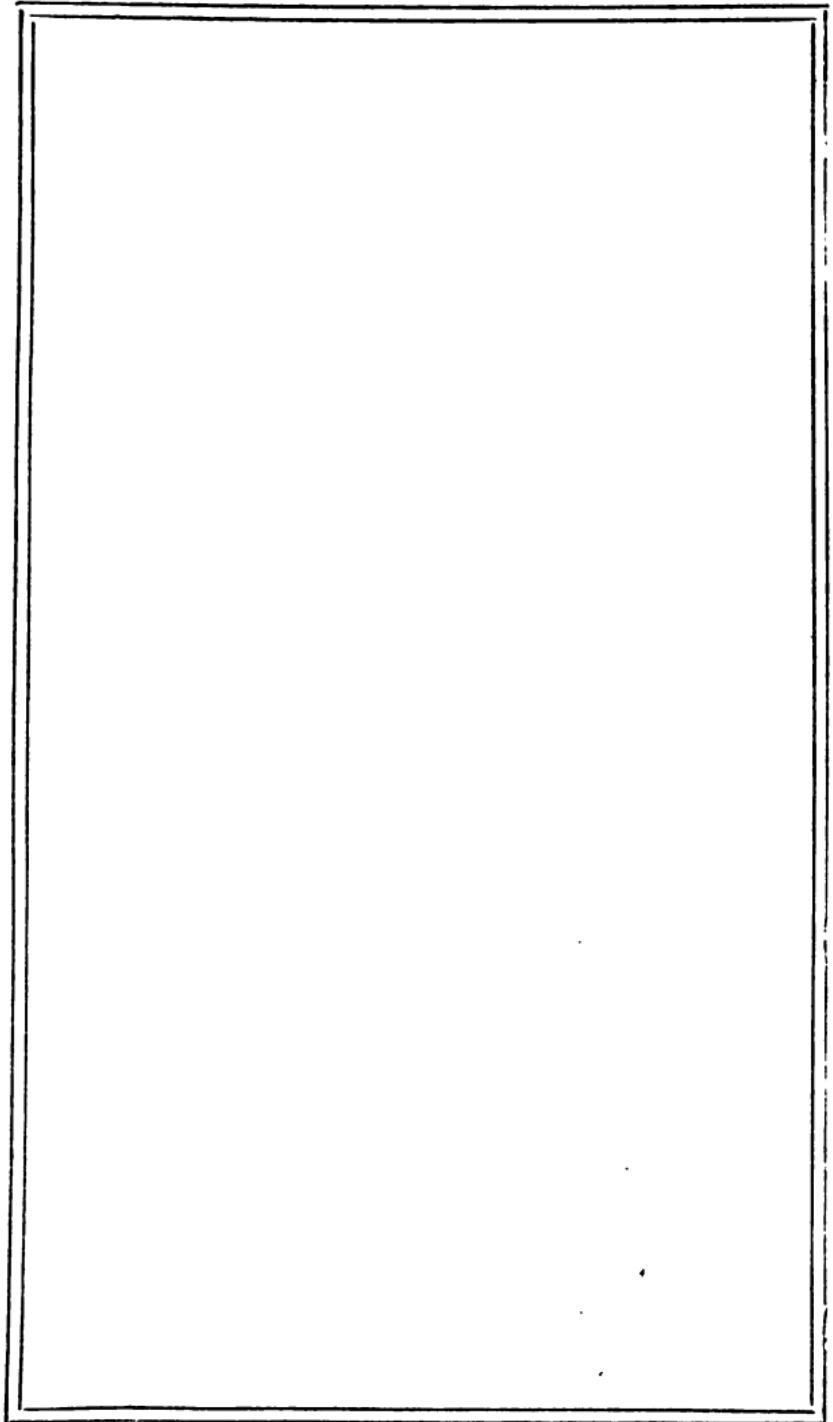
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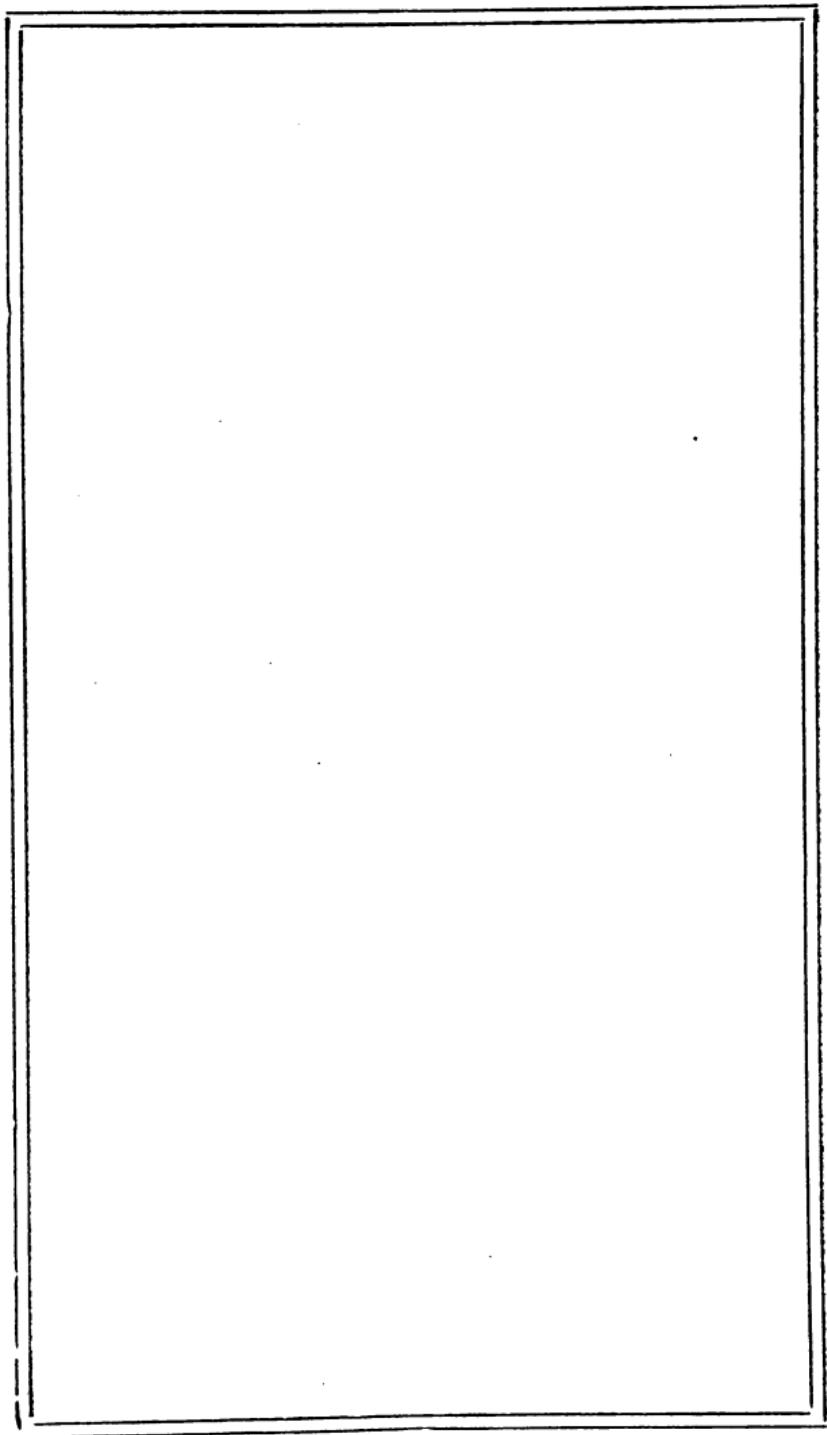
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DDER:

TALE.



THE
STING OF THE ADDER:
A TEMPERANCE TALE.





The body of Jessie was just over the water! Geoffrey
was about to leave go his hold!"

THE
STING OF THE ADDER
A TEMPERANCE TALE
OF
THRILLING INTEREST.

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THE
STING OF THE ADDER.

A TEMPERANCE STORY

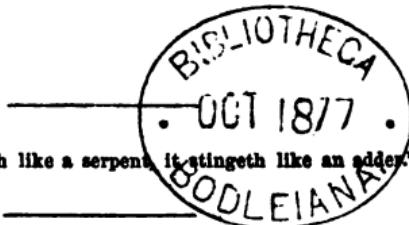
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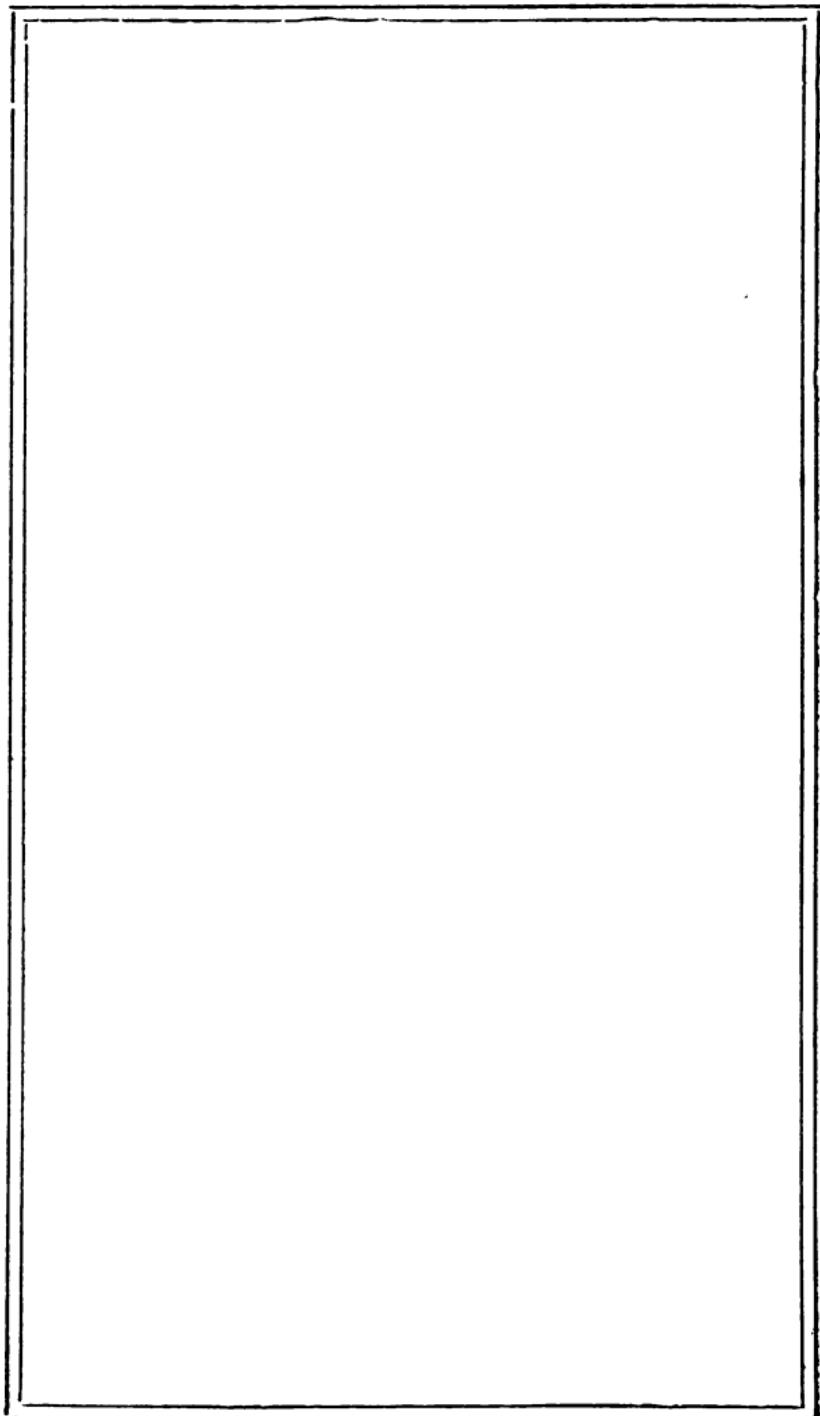
AUTHOR OF

"COUSIN ALBERT'S TALES," "LIVES OF EMINENT WOMEN,"
"TALES OF PERSEVERANCE," "LIFE OF SAMMY HICK,"
"THE ROSE OF WHARFEDALE," "LOVING AND TRUE,"
"ESSENCE OF WISDOM," "THE ROAD," ETC.

"At the last it biteth like a serpent, it stingeth like an adder."



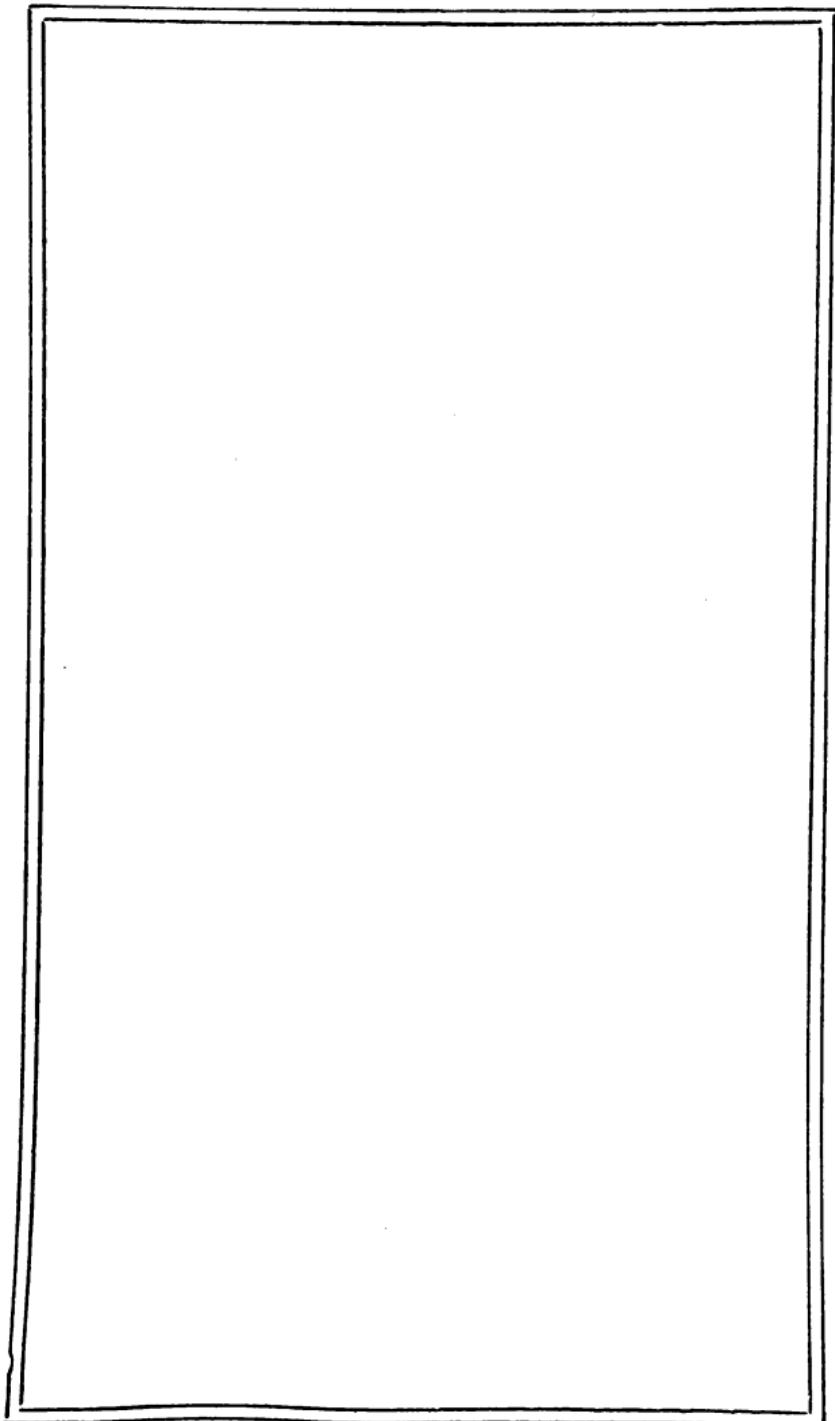
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P R E F A C E .

No apology ought to be needed for an attempt to do good, no matter how far short of the established standard of literary excellence the attempt may reach. The writer of the following humble contribution to our somewhat limited library of Temperance Literature, has lived long enough to be aware, that however the infliction of a new work upon the critic may be justified by the motive, he cannot escape the "fangs and claws" of he whose business it is to give the public a true estimate of the value of the book under review. To this gentleman, but more especially to the public who read me, I may say, apologetically, that these pages were written in leisure hours, during rest from business. They were obliged to be sent forth to the world hastily. As the child was therefore born in such a way, and as it has grown by spasms, and attained its manhood only by dint of hard struggles, I trust it will be tolerated kindly; and, as the new boy is patted upon the head, by the schoolmaster, on his first entrance to the academy, so likewise this little story may receive an encouraging, if somewhat charitable, reception. The writer has had only one motive—to do good. If this end be effected, and if but one erring mortal be convinced, by these pages, that the only true well-spring of human happiness is to traverse the strait road—to keep our vices in subjection, and to fan the flame of virtue into constant and enduring vitality—then the pen may be laid down with thankful contentment.

Otley, 1874.



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THE STING OF THE ADDER.

CHAPTER I.

"Give wisdom hearing, and at least be just,
For every question has its pro and con;
Impartial minds will every phase review,
And give the verdict where the verdict's due."

"I CANNOT see what objections you have to attending the meeting, this evening," mildly suggested a young man, whose age could not be over twenty years.

"I see, and have many. In the first place, those utopian projects about eventually doing away with the drinking customs of society, are uninteresting to me. Secondly, my principles are not in consonance with the object of the meeting; and thirdly, I have a better engagement to occupy my time this evening."

The speakers were two brothers—Alfred and Geoffrey Wallis; the scene, a modern drawing-room, furnished in a plain but substantial style. The family were assembled round the tea-table, and a temperance meeting to be held that night was the subject of conversation. Before we proceed further, let us introduce the reader to the members of the Wallis family.

Alfred and Geoffrey were as yet comparatively young. Both had had great care bestowed upon their education, each had felt the influence of a mother's love, and together they had studied the same lessons, played the same games, enjoyed the same relaxations, and participated in the same rewards. Yet, with different results. Alfred's countenance was open and manly, and bore upon it that expression of honest truthfulness which carries confidence to the hearts of all around. When he spoke, there was a respectful demeanour which seemed to convince the listener that the speaker had keenly at heart the sentiments he uttered. He was firm, but kind; just, but generous. Yet Alfred, like the rest of human kind, was far from perfect, was not free from faults:—

"Whoever thinks a perfect work to see,
Thinks what ne'er was, nor is, nor e'er shall be."

Though not spotless, he was decidedly the more

"loveable" brother of the two. As already stated, Geoffrey had in no way been shut out from the enjoyments allowed to his brother. Yet Geoffrey's character was vastly dissimilar to Alfred's. Occasionally, he became so morose, that few cared to address him while in that humour. His temper was variable, and his inclinations were not to be thwarted without opposition on his part. Yet, in the opinion of many people in S—, he was a young man of considerable promise, and though occasionally morose at home, he was unusually lively abroad. He could sing a good song, and at a recitation some said he had no equal. He lived in an atmosphere of adulation, and praise was almost more to him than necessary food; so that those who most flattered him were, in his opinion, his best friends, whilst, as is often the case, those who tendered prosy, common-sense, well-meant advice, were, in most instances, looked upon as enemies. The reader will therefore see that Geoffrey Wallis was headstrong, egotistic, and exceedingly fond of praise. Let the progress of the story more fully develop the dispositions of himself and his brother.

Around the breakfast-table there are yet four people to whom we would introduce you. Mr. and Mrs. Wallis are in the prime of life. A streak or two of white may perhaps be detected in the hair of the lady, whilst some people might say that Mr. Wallis was getting bald, neither of which would be denied. Mrs. Wallis was fond of her children, did all that a mother is *usually* expected to do for the welfare of her offspring, and prided herself upon the handsome appearance and gentlemanly demeanour of her two sons. She had a daughter, 'tis true, but mothers usually place all their reliance and all their future hopes on the sons, while the daughter appears to them more in the light of an aid and a help in domestic duties. The speculations as to the future, in the case of the latter, are far more limited than those indulged in for the sons. To a mother, there is scarcely anything which, with proper opportunities and advantages, her sons cannot effect. But Mrs. Wallis' mistake was, simply, that the speculations contented her; the idea of training them with any particular and definite object in view did not occur to her, or if it did, she discarded the thought as soon as it was born. She considered that her duty as a mother was fulfilled if she saw that her children had a

good education, and attended regularly a place of worship, whilst she occasionally exerted her authority on the perpetration of any fault too grave to be passed over without remark.

Further than this, neither father nor mother troubled themselves. The likes and dislikes of the brothers and their young sister were not interfered with, so long as they did not annoy or inconvenience the rest of the family. In point of fact, their characters were allowed to develop themselves as best they might. This supineness and comparative indifference on the part of parents is exceedingly common. They seem to forget that some plants require to be fixed and trained in a certain direction, if we do not wish to see them bowed down, unsightly, useless. They must be watched narrowly, and at the first inclination to deviate from the course you have laid down, they must be brought back and bent upwards.

Mr. Wallis was cast in the same mould as his wife, so far as the failing mentioned went. But there was this difference between them. Whilst Mrs. Wallis remained cool and undemonstrative on any and every occasion, no matter what the circumstances might be, Mr. Wallis was passionate, determined, of an iron will, inflexible to the last degree, when he so willed it. Yet the anomaly will scarcely be credited, when we again reiterate that he, like Mrs. Wallis, never interfered with his sons' inclinations, so long as they did not affect his comforts or consciousness of respectability.

After a few other preliminary remarks, we will proceed with our tale; but the reader must pardon us for wishing him to start the journey through our pages with a thorough understanding as to the characters of those with whom we have to deal.

Jenny Wallis was only sixteen years old. Of a light complexion, handsome appearance, and lady-like demeanour. Having had few female companions, her ideas were naturally more advanced, or, as Nurse Hargreaves said, she was most decidedly "old-fashioned," the natural result of continual contact with masculine minds. But her temper was exceedingly sweet. In her case, the jewels were in accordance with the casket; her heart was as good, as her face was fair.

There is only one more person to be introduced just now—Mrs. Hargreaves; from respect, and affectionate remembrance of the office she had formally held in

the family, she was more often favoured with "Nurse" than with "Mrs." While still a strong, stalwart country lass, she had successively nursed Alfred, Geoffrey, and Jenny, and pointed to them with no inconsiderable degree of pride as her "darlings." Her husband was employed at the factory owned by Mr. Wallis, and though he had a home for his wife, she was more often to be found at Rose Cottage than at her own fireside; and as she had no children, Nurse Hargreaves was to some degree excusable.

"Have you ever thought over the matter?" resumed Alfred, questioning Geoffrey.

"Thought over it! Why the fact is, I don't think it worth my attention. I am not such a fool as to sign the pledge, and as yet I am in no great danger."

"Well, boys, don't let us have a long argument about teetotalism. Let it be understood that you can both do as you please. I, for one, can drink a glass of wine without damaging either my own reputation or that of my neighbour," said the head of the family.

"Exactly!" said Geoffrey, "that's what I mean to do. I think it will be time enough to hear about teetotalism when I've got drunk, or done something of that sort."

"And you won't never do that, I knows," said Nurse, "I ain't had the charge o' you so many years not to know but what you can take care o' yourself as well as anybody."

"Well, I think you would not so far forget the dignity of the family," said Mrs. Wallis. "However, what need is there to talk on this subject?"

Much need, Mrs. Wallis, if you could only fathom the mystery of the partial blush which mantles the face of your son Geoffrey. Much need, if you could lift the veil from his heart, and see what remembrances of the past are obtruding themselves. Much need, if you could guess at the reasons for Alfred wishing his brother to attend the temperance meeting. Even a mother is often short-sighted about her own children!

"Well, but I am sure you will favour me with your company at the meeting, just for this one night. If we are wrong, you will be able to point out to me the flaws in our advocacy of temperance truths; if we are right, why I'm sure your sense of justice will lead you to acknowledge the fact."

"What do you want me to go for?" urged Geoffrey.

"Because I have been much happier since I signed the pledge, and as I love my brother, I wish him to participate in everything which brings me pleasure. Jenny has already consented to go. Now don't refuse me, brother."

"Well, I see no use in them temperance societies, myself," said Nurse, "I s'pose they'll soon be having us sign against eating, and then where should we be? I consider a glass o' good ale does no harm to nobody."

"That's perhaps because you haven't heard what harm it can effect," said Jenny. "Now I mean to go and hear for myself, and if I am convinced, I shall join brother Alfred, and sign the pledge, if mother and father have no objection."

"Objection, child!" said Mr. Wallis, "certainly not. If you think it right to sign the pledge, do so. Neither your mother nor I will object. And as to you, Geoffrey, I think that Alfred speaks fairly. Go and hear for yourself."

"But I have another appointment for to-night, which I did not wish to break."

"And what may that be?" asked his father.

"Why—I—I—that is, I've promised to meet two or three fellows."

The searching eye of Alfred was fixed upon his brother, and he detected something in this incoherent and unsatisfactory answer which caused him pain.

"Of course I do not wish to pry into your affairs," said Mr. Wallis, "but I think, as Alfred's request is only reasonable, you might comply with it."

Jenny left her seat, and running to Geoffrey, she threw her long white arms round his neck, and peering into his face with the eloquent persuasiveness of love, said quietly, "Do, brother." Geoffrey dearly loved his little sister, and kissing her, he said, as he removed the little arms, "Alfred, I will comply for once."

"Thank you, Geoffrey. I will not forget that you have humoured me."

"Well, I never see such a girl as my Jenny. She can always get anybody to do what's wanted. I believe she could make an imp do good," said Nurse.

A doubtful compliment to Geoffrey, but one which he either did not perceive, or he thought it best to pass by.

It only wanted two hours to the time of meeting,

and Geoffrey, leaving the room at the conclusion of the meal, retired to his chamber. When there, he opened a small desk, took out writing materials, and penned the two following notes:—

“DEAR JACK,—I am sorry to disappoint you to-night. From what I learn, there will be some rare fun at Longford, and I really should have enjoyed it. But, (you will laugh when I tell you; indeed, I am almost tempted to call myself a fool) I have been bored into attending a temperance meeting, a regular cold-water lecture. But, however, I hope you will find all go off to your satisfaction. Yours, GEOFFREY WALLIS.”

“DEAR HARRY,—Our mutual friend, Jack Jenkins, will give you a reason for my not being with you to-night. As I gave you a challenge, by way of allowing you some chance of revenge, I hereby depute my friend Jack to take up arms for me. If the cards, in his hands, are propitious for me, you must acknowledge yourself fairly beaten. But if, on the contrary, I am worsted by deputy, we will cry quits. Remember me very kindly to the rest of the clique, and believe me,

“Yours truly, GEOFFREY WALLIS.

“P.S.—I believe I owe Andrew Dean five shillings for old scores. As I have sealed up my note to Jenkins, be good enough to say my deputy must pay up all arrears for me, and I will settle with him when we next meet. G. W.”

At eight o'clock, the two brothers with their sister Jenny, were ready to set out; as they stood on the threshold, Geoffrey hung back, he seemed evidently uneasy about something, desiring his companions to go on slowly, and he would follow. Alfred had no fear that his brother's promise, once given, would be broken, so he walked on. Geoffrey re-entered the house, and fetched the two letters he had written. Nurse Hargreaves' house was not above a street's length away. Thither he repaired, and his summons was answered by Hargreaves, a tall, muscular, swarthy man of about forty-five years. Unseen by both, Nurse Hargreaves was coming down the street.

“Here, Hargreaves! I want these delivered immediately, and mind,” said Geoffrey, pantomimically placing his forefinger on his lips, “let nobody know.”

• “All right, Master Geoffrey. I think you knows you can trust me.”

As Geoffrey left, Nurse Hargreaves, her curiosity

excited, hurriedly asked her husband "What Master Geoffrey had to say to him?"

"I reckon it's nothing to you, wife. Speak when you're spoken to, and allers keep your eye shut till its to your own interest to open it."

"You've suddenly grown very polite, Mr. Hargreaves. But there's some mystery or another here, and if I don't get at the bottom of it all, say that—"

"Say you'll never be happy, and if you wait till you finds this out, take my word for it, ye'll be miserable all your life-time. Now then hold your tongue."

It was very evident that Nurse Hargreaves thought discretion was the better part of valour, for she immediately busied herself about her household affairs, while her worthy husband first took a heavy potion from a black bottle, buttoned up his overcoat, and then prepared to execute Geoffrey's commissions. As he went on his way, he kept muttering to himself, and these words were plainly audible:—

"That young chap's going to get himself more and more into my good graces. Well, he'll find 'at I shall want good interest for all my trouble. I feel no doubt 'at I shall get all I want, *and perhaps more.*'"

At the door of the lecture-room, Alfred and Jenny were joined by Geoffrey, who certainly did not trust himself to look his brother and sister stedfastly in the face. As it is generally accepted that this is the test of an unsullied mind on the part of the one performing the feat, we must naturally come to the conclusion that Geoffrey was rather ashamed.

It is not necessary to enter upon a lengthy explanation or examination of the speaker's address. Suffice it is to say that he was earnest and eloquent, with unlimited power of oratory at his command. He dealt equally well, and with equally beneficial results, in either the sublime or the common-place. He never wearied you with long, dry disquisitions, which, however instructive, lost their effect for want of judicious treatment. A piquant anecdote now and then roused up those who felt disposed to nod, but these were few and far between.

The three visitors with whom we have more particularly to do, pushed forward to the front seats, at least Alfred did. Jenny was content to follow Alfred, and Geoffrey mechanically went anywhere, feeling all the time as if he were sneaking in where he had no right

to be, for all the world as if he were a dog with his tail contumaciously curled downwards. But he needed not to feel thus, if he came with a desire to be instructed, and to weigh with an unprejudiced mind the arguments for both sides. It so happened that he was seated directly opposite the speaker, who seemed to talk at Geoffrey (so he thought, perhaps from a consciousness that he deserved it) more than at the rest of the audience in general. We wish only to give one extract from the speaker's address of that evening. It was one that many in the audience had ample cause to remember in after-life.

"Where is the daughter who has sullied the fair reputation of a long line of ancestors, famed for their integrity, their honour, their purity, their uprightness? She will tell you what an awfnl help to her downfall has been this accursed drink. Where is the son who has deserted his family, sacrificed his manhood at the shrine of Bacchus, bartered his honesty, disowned his God, insulted his Maker, and brought his father's grey hairs in sorrow to the grave? Where is he? Let him say how great a part the poison-cup has had in his ruin. Let him stand up in this public assembly, and tell the parents whose treasures are as yet unsullied by contact with the giant evil of drunkenness, what the monster has done, is doing, and can yet do, if you do not grapple with, and strangle him, before he overpowers you. I have no doubt there are young men here who will say, 'Why what's the good of my signing the pledge, I'm next door to teetotal?' If you are so, young man, then in God's name FLIT, as we say in our country. On the other side of you there's a more dangerous neighbour, and you may involuntarily have to move *there* sometime. It's no use scoffers coming here! We have so many real facts to put before them, that jeers and laughter are powerless, as harmless as feathers flung against a sheet of iron. You may laugh, but you'll repent it; you may sneer, but you'll be sorry for it. Now let the sneer die away under a conviction of the righteousness of our cause, and don't let me say that I have gone away from S—— without effecting the reformation of *some* young men."

As the speaker sat down, Alfred certainly "nudged" his brother, who was sitting quite demurely, with a very stolid and immoveable countenance. Geoffrey felt disposed to resent this implied necessity for re-

formation, but a public-room is not exactly fitted for an animated conversation. How strange it is that when we half suspect we are in the wrong, and a neighbour corroborates it by reproving us, we feel strongly disposed to take summary vengeance on him for agreeing with us!

Geoffrey had heard all the speaker said, but then he argued that there were two sides to a question, and that the pleasures and advantages (so he argued) secured by retaining his moderate drinking habits, far more than counterbalanced the advantages resulting from a constant abstinence from intoxicating drinks.

As they were walking homewards, Alfred said:—

“Well, Geoffrey, grant that there is some wisdom in the speaker’s arguments?”

“I can’t see it. I think the most part of it was all ‘moonshine.’ Why, I suppose a chap is never to eat, because another man makes a glutton of himself.”

“You are going on an old tack. But as sixty thousand people die every year from drink, and perhaps not six die from gluttony, the comparison falls to the ground, since in the case you quote, the evil is not of sufficient importance to require the application of the remedy.”

“I don’t know what you mean, dear Alf, but whilst you and Geoffrey were talking, I stole up to the green table and signed the pledge,” whispered Jenny.

“Did you? Then there’s a kiss for you. I love you more than ever, dear little sister!”

“Pooh! I think you are half-witted to do such a thing,” said Geoffrey.

“Ten years hence, we will remember what you have said.” As he uttered these words, Alfred entered his home again. To Geoffrey, they sounded something like an ominous prophecy, and his brow was damp with cold sweat.

Geoffrey Wallis felt uncomfortable when he retired to rest that evening. Why, we should be rather puzzled to tell the enquirer, simply because Geoffrey himself scarcely knew. At present he was not open to any very severe strictures on the score of his drinking habits, whatever he might be as regarded acts connected with his occasional glass. Perhaps he felt an undefined sense of not being altogether in the right; perhaps Alfred had not pleased him too well by his pertinacious attack; or again, he might not be flattered by the comparisons which would be drawn between

himself and his brother;—the one not over particular as to either companions or their failings, the other certainly confining himself to home pleasures and the society of one or two young men, of whom the worst that could be said was that they kept themselves perhaps *too* select, and by what they termed “cutting” the society of many others not so well grounded in the principles of right and wrong, neglected opportunities of giving a “word in due season.”

Geoffrey did not do what Alfred did. The latter, before retiring, bended his knees in prayer at the footstool of God, and beseeched Him to bless the lecture to which they had just been listening. Before Geoffrey had closed his eyes, he succeeded in convincing himself that *he* had nothing to be afraid of, that the possibility of *his* disgracing the family was highly improbable, and that for the present he would not trouble himself any more about the teetotal lecture, and finally, that it would be time enough to apply the remedy, when the remedy was really wanted. And this is how the conscience is lulled. We give it an opiate composed of misrepresentation, procrastination, and untruth, and under this influence it sleeps, until the ultimate waking discovers that the draught was a tissue of falsehoods, and while it calmed us for the moment, it left us, after all, more restless than ever.

When morning came, and breakfast was over, the lecture, amongst other matters, formed the topic of conversation, and in the midst of it all, the Reverend Harvey Sleigh, a minister of the Church of England, was announced. After the usual greetings, the visitor apologised for so early an intrusion, but stated that a woman from whose house he had just come, desired to see Master Geoffrey. She had not many hours to live, and he was to say that she would take a visit from Geoffrey as an especial favour.

“But what can this woman want with me?” said Geoffrey. “What is her name?”

“What she wants I really cannot tell you, but as to her name, I believe it is Mrs. Dean.”

At this name, Geoffrey slightly blushed, scarcely perceptibly. He could not guess what she wanted, but as she was the mother of Andrew Dean, he judged it best to comply, *all circumstances considered*.

“I shall be glad to go, as you request it, sir. But before we go, would you have any objection to give

us your opinion upon a subject which we are at present discussing?"

"I will do so, with pleasure. Pray enlighten me as to what the subject may be."

"Simply this," said Alfred, "I want Geoffrey to sign the pledge, and endeavour to keep it."

"The pledge? Why what can you mean, not the teetotal pledge, surely!"

"Oh, yes, nothing else. I think that it would secure him against ever overstepping the bounds of moderation and prudence in drinking. Then besides, a young man has no need to drink."

"You see they are quite full of it at present, Mr. Sleigh. Here's my little Jenny, too, *she* must take up arms against this drinking business, though, God knows, she has little need," said Mrs. Wallis, fondly stroking the brown hair of the young convert.

"Well, I am almost tempted to laugh, Mrs. Wallis, I am indeed. It's true that for these drunken men, who think it glorious to drown their reason, the pledge is admirable. But I go no further. To say that respectable individuals, who drink a glass of wine now and then, should abjure it for ever, just because a few fanatics think it would save the drunkard, is simply absurd."

"That's just what I think," said Geoffrey, inwardly congratulating himself upon this corroboration of his opinions, and from so high a source, too. "I shan't sign the pledge, not I."

"But, respecting that last remark of yours, Mr. Sleigh, don't you think a good example of use?"

"Certainly, and I set a good example—one of strict moderation."

"And if others try to do as you do, and fail. What then?" urged Alfred.

"The sin is upon their own head; I have done my duty."

"Excuse me, sir, I think that if you didn't drink at all, and so kept your flock from drinking by setting an example *quite* safe for them to follow, it would be a deal better," said Jenny, who immediately felt ashamed of trying to argue with a clergyman.

"Hey-day, Miss Jenny, we shall have you on the platform some of these days. However, Mr. Sleigh, I let my children do as they like in a matter of conscience," said Mr. Wallis.

"Quite right, Mr. Wallis. And as this is a matter that is scarcely ever settled satisfactorily, we will not carry the argument further. Are you ready, Geoffrey?"

"I am," said he, with an evident smile of satisfaction upon his face.

If that clergyman, who was otherwise a good man, could have torn away the veil that hid the future, could have known how his own rotten and unsafe arguments would recoil upon and injure himself, could have seen what responsibility attached itself to his conscience for this unwise advice, could he only have noted the amount of injury that would result to more than one of his auditors, as a consequence of his light treatment of an important subject, he would have paused, nay, he would even have wished his tongue paralysed, rather than that it should have uttered such advice. But it is not given to us to look beyond the present, and the *unknown*, which might possibly prevent the errors of a life (were they exposed), would oftener expunge every chance of happiness from the existence that might otherwise have its fair, as well as its darker side.

The clergyman and Geoffrey left the house together, the former for home, the latter for the abode of Mrs. Dean. Let us follow him to the home of the dying widow, and hear why she has called to her bedside a young man whom she knows not, and who knows not her.

It was not a very pretentious home for anyone, and was certainly not in keeping with the appearance made before his companions by Andrew Dean. So thought Geoffrey.

A humble servant conducted him up two flights of stairs to Mrs. Dean's bedroom, which, when entered, presented all the appearances of a sick person's long sojourn. The table at the bedside was covered with bottles and glasses, unwashed medicine spoons, and various other details; but close to the edge, near the woman's bedside, was a little miniature photograph, which Geoffrey immediately knew to be that of her son Andrew. The visitor waited an instant, until Mrs. Dean opened her eyes. She either recognised him, or guessed who he was, and with a faint, sickly smile, she thanked him, and beckoned him to a chair. Geoffrey almost felt as if a dream were being enacted before him, for he had no idea what part he could be required to play.

Mrs. Dean propped up her head with another pillow, and then, fixing her gaze very stedfastly upon the face of Geoffrey, who was all attention, she said, very faintly at first, but gradually growing enthusiastic as she proceeded:—

“ You are Geoffrey Wallis, I think; are you not, sir?”

“ *Mr. Geoffrey Wallis I am, certainly,*” said Geoffrey, rather nettled.

“ Well, well, you should not stand on ceremony with a dying woman.”

“ Proceed, mam; I wait to learn your reason for requiring my presence here.”

“ It is briefly this. My son Andrew—you know him—he mixes with gay companions, he loves his social glass, he has loved it too much of late. He knows that his wild and reckless course has brought me to the edge of the grave. I have wasted the little strength I possess in wearily watching for his return, day after day. Yesterday he came, but at night he went away again. Oh! how I have counted every tick of that clock as the hours passed on, hoping to hear the welcome tread of a repentant son; but he came not, he heeded not. I thought he loved his mother much, very much; he loves his own inclinations better, and he has nearly killed me. You cannot conceive how I have suffered, sir, you cannot realize the fathomless extent of a mother’s love; and then to see my only son, and he the son of a widow, mixing with gay companions, almost defying the laws of God and man, coldly allowing me to sacrifice everything that he might keep up his hollow show of respectability, it is heart-breaking. *My heart is already broken.*”

Geoffrey scarcely knew what to say, or what to do. Mrs. Dean was almost exhausted, and he waited to hear the sequel to this unlooked-for disclosure.

“ Yet I love him as much as ever, and this is what pains me. If I were despoiled of my love for him, if it were dead, and he had no share in my thoughts, to die would be easy, since I rest my hopes on the bright future which I trust is in store for me, and otherwise earth has no share in my thoughts. But it is not so. And now, sir, for what concerns you in this matter. They tell me that you are the life and soul of those convivial meetings which are leading Andrew on to ruin. They say that though you do not drink to excess yourself, yet in your society others do. Now,

you must have influence, and I implore you, with my last breath, to save Andrew."

She paused for breath, and Geoffrey took the opportunity to speak.

"I'm very sorry that Andrew has occasioned you so much trouble, but, really, it is no fault of mine. He is his own master, or at any rate, I am not master of him; and I'm very sure that if you cannot influence him, no one can."

"Then you refuse to listen to my prayers? Do not—do not say so!"

"As I cannot see that I can carry out your wishes, it's of no use promising. Andrew is just one of those persons who ought to sign the pledge. You must impress——"

Geoffrey saw that he was speaking to an unconscious being. As he rushed toward the door, that he might call the domestic, a tall, fair young man, with a dissipated look, lounged into the room, and as soon as he saw Geoffrey, said, "Ah! Geoff, what' you doing here? We've had such a jolly night of it! Got the five shillings tipped all right, too." He was evidently in that semi-drunk state—just between consciousness of inability to speak sensibly, and a desire to try and do so. The dying woman knew her son's voice.

"Andrew! Andrew! You are come, you are come to bid me good-bye. Bless you."

In the excitement of the moment, she nearly fell out of the bed. She would have done so, but that Andrew rushed forward and supported her. When he looked into her face, the poor woman's breath had gone, her pulse was still, and even now, death had stamped upon her white, wan face, his livid seal. Andrew saw this, and his countenance turned ghastly pale, while he shouted:—

"Dead! And she died blessing him whom she should have cursed." He was sober now.

"Yes! You have killed her!" said Geoffrey, as he took up his hat and left the chamber.

CHAPTER II.

"I had rather teach twenty men what were best to be done, than be one of the twenty to follow mine own teaching."—SHAKESPEARE.

"I find that it is far better to be able to say 'Do as I do, and not as I advise.'"—LONDON CITY MISSIONARY.

WITH the reader who is accustomed to make up his mind as to the character of an individual, from the drift and significance of the person's remarks, Nurse Hargreaves will have already taken her right position in their understandings. But others may perhaps require a little explanation, and as she and her husband have both their parts to play in our story, we will devote a few lines to them alone, premising that one of them scarcely deserves so much trouble.

Nurse Hargreaves could not boast of much education, and as an almost natural consequence, the brilliancy and magnitude of her ideas were in proportion, because she was not gifted with wit or wisdom to make up for the lack of instruction. But *she* was not of this opinion, and demonstrated the fact on every possible occasion by advancing her ideas with more force than wisdom. She did not get on exceedingly smoothly with her husband, for he had many oddities about him that she could not understand, and which he never designed she *should* understand; and as, Fatima-like, anything akin to mystery was very certain to awaken in her a strong desire to know the why and wherefore of the whole affair (this desire being as certain to meet with a rebuff), her mind was constantly on the rack, to escape from which, all the female ingenuity she possessed could not free her. With this exception, she had not much of which to complain. Her household duties were light, for she had no children; most of her leisure-time, of which she had plenty, was spent at Mr. Wallis', where she was received with a great deal more kindness and respect than was ever accorded her by her husband. When Nurse married, Hargreaves was only a better sort of agricultural labourer; but to shew his appreciation of an old favourite, and to ensure her and her husband a comfortable home, Mr. Wallis gave Hargreaves a situation as porter in his factory.

Hargreaves himself had not very much that could recommend him to the favourable notice of anybody; perhaps it might be that he never strove to deserve anybody's good word—it was certain that he had never

had it. From his conversation you might gather that he was rough, uncouth, often uncivil, and seldom polite. From his face—that he was cunning, determined, and unscrupulous. From his acts—that he was not exactly worthy the society of strictly honest men. And yet for all this, if his society were not sought for, it was not avoided; and to some extent, he could contribute to the amusement of a company, in his own peculiar way. There was another reason why he was not shunned. No one could tell you why; but if Hargreaves ever quarrelled with any of the two hundred workmen in Mr. Wallis' employ, something was sure to happen them. It might be seven days or seven years after the quarrel, but the ultimate misfortune was sure to come. So that although he was not liked, he was feared, and of the two he preferred the latter. One of his least faults was that he took his glass, but he was never known to be drunk. If we ask the reason, it was not because he had no desire, but because he was afraid that if his tongue once began to wag without the control of his permission, *it might not be well with him.*

We wish the reader to follow Hargreaves for one night, first giving you a glimpse of a conversation held by Mrs. Hargreaves with a neighbour.

"What a noise this teetotal gentleman is making, to be sure," says the neighbour.

"Yes! indeed; and seems to me it's all nought. I hate to hear sich twaddle about never tasting, touching, nor handling intoxicating liquors! If I was the vicar, I'd put it down."

"Why, Mr. Sleigh *did* talk about it in his sermon, last Sunday. He took for his text—'Let your moderation be known unto all men.' He's a nice fellow, and I've no doubt he'll be a bishop or a archbishop some o' these days."

"A good text too. Why look at my man. *He* never gets drunk and makes a fool of himself; he'll go out to-night and get a glass or two, but he won't make a fool of himself, I know."

"Them's the sort I like. Why I wouldn't give a snap of my finger for anybody as is afraid of a good glass of ale. They haven't got much courage, I think."

"So think I. When any ill comes o' my man's drinking, it will be time to talk about teetotalism then."

What fallacy! Here is the same answer by an un-

educated woman as the one given by Geoffrey Wallis, both tending to deceive. Is the physician required to wait until the patient gets *worse*, before he applies his remedies? Prevention, surely, is better than cure.

It is twelve o'clock at night. Now let us follow Sam Hargreaves, and see the theory of these two women practically carried into effect. We desire that the reader will prepare himself for a scene of riot, one of every-day occurrence at hundreds of taverns in some of our large cities. We may partially reproduce the pictures, but exaggeration is impossible; and were it not for the connection which the scene has with our story, we might possibly spare our more polite reader the annoyance of following us. But now that the curtain must be drawn aside, let us try to present the scene faithfully.

Round the corner of the street in which Hargreaves' house is placed, there is a "Public" of a not over-respectable kind, named "The Lion." We suppose that if it does not *go about* seeking whom it may devour, at least, it has not the slightest objection to devour (not them, but) their purses, health, reputation, and everything most dear to an honest man.

We have said it is midnight, and we have chosen this time because you will get a fair idea of the picture we wish to present. Sooner, the company would only have just commenced their potations, and later, the scene would be too disgusting for description.

A company of fourteen or fifteen men are sitting round a large table, which graces the centre of a well-lighted room. We deem it superfluous to add that the place reeks of tobacco and of that nasty smell of stale beer to be found in most tap-rooms. The table is highly ornamented with numerous sticky rings of ale, from the marks of glasses; these rings surpassing, in ingenious confusion, the most intricate figures ever made with the assistance of compasses. Half-filled tumblers, pewter pint-pots, and tobacco-ashes occupy the table, at the head of which sits Sam Hargreaves. At his side you will find three other workmen from Wallis' factory, viz., Harrison, Freeman, and Taylor. Scarcely one of the fourteen men were sober, except Hargreaves, who had his own reasons for keeping so.

"Here, landlord, fill up this mug again. That's about the best ale I ever tasted. It's better than roast beef—it's more strength in it."

"They do say, as you dunnet often taste roast beef;
so you beant a judge."

"Ain't I?" said the first speaker, "I've eat as much
as you, anyhow."

"You may ha' done, and not be in any danger o'
burstin', for all that."

"Now, lads, keep your tempers, I'll have no quar-
relling here," said Hargreaves. Who's going to give
us the next song. Come, Freeman, my lad, tune up."

It is usual with drinkers not to hesitate much, so
Freeman, who was quite a young man compared to the
others, sung the following, the chorus of which was
loudly shouted (not sung) by those around him.

A GLASS O' GOOD BEER.

I've sung about wine, heard its glories discuss'd—
Of the virtues of hock, and of port with old crust;
But it's true, after all, that there's nothing will cheer
Like a heart-warming, soul-stirring glass o' good beer.

If you want to be happy, and drown all your care,
If you feel that your troubles you cannot well bear,
Then turn to "The Lion," and hitherward steer,
If you'd meet with a beautiful glass o' good beer!

The singer sat down amidst the approbation of glass-
bottoms, and wiping his mouth, took a long 'pull' at
the pint-pot, in illustration of his sentiments. But
another listener, besides those around, had heard the
song. He had paused at the inn door, and at the con-
clusion, walked into the midst of the company.

"Friends, Freeman has given you *one* song, pray
may I give you another?"

"What, Wilson?" said several voices, all at once.
"Oh, yes! We—we shall all be glad to hear your song.
Take a seat," said Freeman, rather diffidently.

Wilson, as he was called, waved his hand by way of
refusal, and then sung, in a loud, emphatic and
musical voice, a song about

A BRIGHT GLASS OF WATER.

You've heard about wine, had its glories discussed,
So sing about water I certainly must;
You may prate as you list of the virtues of wine,
But I to clear water will always incline.

A coward is he who to spirits must go
To give him new courage to bear all his woe;
I'd far rather face it with firm hand and heart,
But spirits to help me shall ne'er have a part.

So now then, my friends, with your glass o' good beer,
You'll all of you say that I've just come to sneer;
You can say what you please—in the midst of your clatter,
Even *you* I will stick to my bright glass of water.

Not a bit of applause followed *this* song. Had it
been something which countenanced them in their

midnight orgy, it would have been approved. As it was, murmurs of "Duck him," "Give him plenty of his bright water," &c., began to be manifest, and some few staggered upon their feet towards Wilson. But he was soon out of the room, passing, on his way, the ominous visage of the landlord, who would have relished kicking this opponent to his business. But, fortunately, Wilson reached home in safety, after having been some distance to relieve the wants of a sick woman. His interference was soon forgotten, and sounds of riot and revelry grew more rife. The clamour of Babel could scarcely have surpassed that wonderful chaos of human sounds. Intellect, for the nonce, gave place to brute desires, and swallowing was the order of the night—or rather morning. The outer doors were shut, and as the bar-parlour was far back, and the night-policeman was not above a glass or two now and then, the landlord felt no fears of interruption to his trade. A little girl had, meanwhile, crept in by a side entrance. She was pale and ragged, and big drops had evidently coursed down her hollow cheeks. It was a cold night, yet her feet were bare and intensely blue. Her matted hair was luxurious in its profusion, and would have been beautiful, had the careful hand of a mother trained it into something like order. As she entered the bar, she drew a piece of rag over her shoulders, and in answer to the landlord, who roughly asked "What beggars wanted there at that time of night?" the poor creature said :—

"If you please, sir, is my father here?" Her little heart seemed nearly bursting, and she looked intensely at him, as if praying to be answered.

"How should I know? I don't suppose he is."

"Thomas Taylor's his name. Please *do* see. I must speak to him."

Now the landlord knew very well that the said Thomas Taylor was one of his company, but he did not chose to know. We have seen this done a score of times.

"No, he isn't!" But the little girl had been peering into the room, and through the clouds of smoke, amidst the clamour of tongues, she saw his figure and heard his voice. On the instant, she darted past the landlord, who favoured her with an anathema.

"Dear father, do—do come home. Don't spend any more money; mother wants some food."

"What's thou doing here? (hiccup). Thou—thou'll be horsewhipped when I get thee home. Coming out that way, too. Where's thy shoes, thou little monkey?"

"My shoes, they're at—(you know where, father)! You don't remember that you—you sold them, do you father? But never mind, only come home!"

"Come home, not I! Sit thee down there, and if thou's quiet five minutes, I happen may. Sit thee down. That's reight."

It is wonderful what instinct these drunkard's children have. What unnatural knowledge of cause and effect they possess. The little thing thought that waiting was her only chance.

"Here, landlord, let's have another pot. Look sharp!" said Taylor.

"Money, please." The intended purchaser fumbled in his pockets.

"I haven't any. I'm cleaned out. Give us it on trust."

"Trust?" grinned the landlord, "I never trust sots."

"Sots! Who made me a sot? You, I suppose. Sots indeed! (hiccup). If you say that again, I'll make you stand on your head."

"No impudence, or I'll have you turned out into the street."

Taylor rose to his feet, and his clenched fist was uplifted towards the landlord.

"Father! Dear father! Don't fight, do come away home. *Do come.*"

One blow was levelled at the landlord; it missed him. The other was struck at his poor little innocent child, who was soon carried out of the room, a corpse. Surely, a crown in heaven, a pure life, a noble inheritance *there*, were better far than a squalid dress, a wretched existence, and a legacy of rags *here*.

Such an uproar ensued now, that it almost defies description. The lights were put out, toes were trod upon, blows were struck, till finally the place was filled with yells and execrations; a fit reflection of the dwelling-place of the demon—Drink.

The party broke up, when many noses and shins had been broken. On the morrow, an inquest was held on the body of the child. Mr. Wallis was one of those whose counsel was required on that occasion. A verdict of "manslaughter, whilst under the influence of drink," was returned, which being done, they all

retired and took a glass of old port, then separating. Taylor was tried, and sentenced to a few months' imprisonment, but was to be found at work in the factory not many days after his release. Mr. Wallis said that as the blow was the result of an accident, and Taylor was too valuable a man to lose, he would again employ him. The landlord was simply mulcted in a fine for keeping open after hours.

Now let us follow Hargreaves for a few moments, and see what effect his moderate drinking had upon him. We will take our place by the side of his wife, who is patiently waiting.

The reader must remember that Hargreaves was not what is termed 'drunk'; but if our opinion were asked, we should decidedly say that, though he could walk straight, and had sense enough to know the way home, he was as much drunk as Freeman; since our idea is, that anybody who even partially drowns his reason is, to some extent, intoxicated; and though there may be *degrees* of intoxication, the same term will apply equally well to all.

Mrs. Hargreaves sat by the half-burnt-up fire, restlessly rocking herself, inwardly wondering what could have kept Hargreaves at the inn. Once she was upon the point of starting to fetch him, but she had never yet done so, and the duty was repugnant to her, notwithstanding her open advocacy of the only thing that made it so. She therefore sat down again. The long wick of the candle had curled and curled for want of attention, and it gave but a feeble light. The old Dutch clock kept monotonously ticking away, as if in mockery of the restless woman's thoughts. For the time, that old clock seemed endued with the power of speech. One could almost fancy a voice from the face, saying, "Ah! how many long, long weary hours have you not wasted in waiting for that moderate-drinking husband? I know. How many of my minutes have seemed to you like hours, until he came in? I know. How many hours rest have you not wasted because of your husband's glass? I know." And the old clock ticked away more loudly than ever, as if in corroboration of all this. Mrs. Hargreaves dozed again; the flickering candle threw queer shadows upon the wall, and her fancy shaped them into all sorts of figures. It is a weary thing, waiting and watching, full of un-

certainty as to when you may be relieved. But a sound suddenly roused her. It was the tread—not of one man, but of four or five. In an instant the door was opened, and she peered out into the clear, moonlight, frosty night. Down the street came five men. In the midst, Mrs. Hargreaves could just recognise Taylor, whose visage was now ghastly in the extreme. Rage, despair, revenge, were plainly written there.

"What—oh, what has he been doing?" said she, as the men passed.

"Killed his child!" said one of the policemen. "Your husband will be wanted as a witness."

And on they went; while such men as Taylor was the company with which the moderate-drinker had mixed. Mrs. Hargreaves was now more anxious than ever. Sounds of riot were plainly distinguishable; and she knew, by the direction, from whence they came. Sam Hargreaves, just then, turned the corner of the street, and said:—

"Well, what are *you* doing outside the door, at three o'clock in the morning?"

"I might ask you where ha' *you* been till three o'clock? That's more liker it."

"Mind your own business; and that business is to do what you are told, take no notice of anything but what I want you to, and not to be uncivil."

"And is this what I married *you* for? God help me."

"I suppose so! You might have gone farther and fared worse!"

"Not much," said Mrs. Hargreaves, bitterly. "Sam, you're drunk."

"You lie, I am not. I never was more sober in my life."

"Then what makes you speak so roughly? You treats me worse than I ever knew you do before. Sometimes I can scarcely make you out, Sam."

"Oh, dear! how funny. But come, don't let us waste time," said Hargreaves, in a decided tone. "I've a request to make to you, and you'll have to heed it."

"What is it, Sam?" I'll do anything, only don't be so unkind."

"You see this piece of wax—very good. On the dressing-table, in Maister Wallis' room, there's a certain key to be found every night after seven o'clock. I want you to squeeze this wax on the end of that key, and bring back the wax to me without rubbing out the shape o' the key.

"For what can you want it? You have got *so* mysterious of late, Sam."

"Have I? Well, you'll be none the wiser if you keep on questioning for ever. Are you going to let me have that impression, or not?"

"Of course I must get it if you order me; but I'd like to know what it's for."

"I dare say, but you won't. Mark! mind you tell nobody abou this. If you do, as true as I am here, I'll——"

"Don't say if, Sam, don't. I'll do all you want me to do."

And so this weak woman retired to rest, promising to do something that was to lead to—she knew not what. The candle was snuffed, the fire raked out, the doors locked, and the old Dutch clock struck four by way of "good-night."

* * * *

The *fracas* at "The Lion" reached the ears of the Reverend Harvey Sleigh, and he thought himself in duty bound to call upon some of the principal actors in the scene. Amongst the first he called upon was Taylor, now in prison.

"My good friend, those drinking habits of yours will ruin you."

"Very likely; but when a man's foot's in the mire, it's hard to get out."

"Not if you resolve to do right. Nothing then can hinder you. If you were a Christian, I might talk to you about the power of the Gospel to save you from all evil."

"Aye! you parsons are capital talkers. You should occasionally try to feel as we feel, prescribe remedies suited to a man like me."

"Well, so I do. The simple remedy is the pledge. You ought to sign against drink."

"I know that, but you cannot guess what an appetite I have for it. Why, sometimes I think you could more easily kill me, than get me to sign. Why, bless you, if anything would make me sign, it would be the death of that beautiful little girl of mine. You don't know how I loved her, and yet see what I have done! It's all very well to say 'Sign the pledge.' *How has it answered with you?*"

"Answered with me?" Why, I have not signed the

pledge, but if I were you I should most certainly do so." The clergyman was growing rather uncomfortable.

"That's it! that's it! You are not me, and more than that, *I'm not you.*"

"What do you mean, my good man, what is your drift?"

"Why, you want me to do something as you won't do yourself. If it ain't good for me, why it ain't good for you. If it's bad stuff for me, it can't be good for you."

There was some sense in Taylor's view of the question, and Mr. Sleigh left the prisoner without making much impression upon him. The clergyman himself did not feel inclined to alter *his* view of the case. We may as well state what stood in the way, it was not so much conscience as PALATE.

* * * *

Andrew Dean was inconsolable for the first few days. But after his mother's funeral was over, in spite of the fearful lesson which drink might be supposed to have taught him, he went back to the bottle, perhaps not so much as formerly, still he did not scruple to make friends with what had made him lose a good, affectionate mother. He met Geoffrey, one day, as the latter was returning from the factory.

"Andrew, your mother's last wish, expressed to me, was this—that I would try and save you from ruin, by getting you to abjure drink for ever."

"*You, you above all others!* This is mockery!" Andrew laughed bitterly.

"Well, I don't exactly think so. Did you ever see me drunk?"

"No! But I *have* seen you the centre of a circle of young men who, perhaps, did not restrain themselves quite as much as yourself. Your example was there."

"Well, but I always kept myself respectable; now you *ought* to sign the pledge."

"Too late, now. I once drank for pleasure, I now drink to forget the past."

"Nonsense! You can give up if you like."

"Follow your own counsel, Geoffrey; don't meddle with me. If you thought you had a duty to perform, you have done it. But advice, such as you tender, can scarcely come consistently from you; so say no more on this topic. When we meet again, wherever and whenever that may be, let the watchword be '*oblivion.*'"

Geoffrey Wallis laughed at himself as he bent his steps homeward. He laughed at the way in which he had played the adviser, and he knew, as well as Andrew, that Geoffrey Wallis was *not* the man from whom such advice ought to come. And yet he cared not to alter the state of things as they were. He was growing strangely indifferent to Good, and if he heeded not, the genii would soon desert him for some more plastic subject. In our next chapter, we will follow him to Longford, and see if we can find any solution to the mystery there.

CHAPTER III.

No wavering here ! no vacillation now,
For firmness must be written on that brow ;
No laughter, scoffs or jeers should change your mind,
Or hopes of bliss may yet be undermined.

"Shew me his companions, and I'll shew you the man."

ALFRED WALLIS reposed very little confidence in the steadiness of his brother Geoffrey. He could prove nothing, and yet he had good grounds for surmising a great deal. When the office closed, Geoffrey seldom went home with his brother, but turned off towards Longford, a large manufacturing town, about three miles from L_____. From thence he seldom returned before the family retired to rest. Twice he was even after that time, but had managed to invent a pretty plausible excuse, which, with parents not too much given to rigid enquiry, sufficed to satisfy them. But not so with Alfred. Though younger than Geoffrey, he took upon himself to question him, but received such a decided rebuff, that he did not renew the experiment. Still he did not cease to watch the movements of Geoffrey, and though not naturally suspicious, he had many misgivings.

Mr. Wallis's factory employed, as already stated, about two hundred workmen, whose wages varied from ten to forty shillings per week. The work turned out by the employés consisted of machinery of various kind, requiring skilled labour in its construction, and in some portions of the establishment, men of almost herculean strength were wanted. In the office, Geoffrey and Alfred had duties allotted them. Mr. Wallis never intended that they should be human puppets, understanding nothing except commanding others. They

had had to learn practically the whole processes of the establishment, and if hard manual labour were spared them, hard study was not. They had now reached the counting-house, in which they had been more than a year. Alfred had charge of the entry of goods despatched, material ordered, &c., while Geoffrey's duties consisted in taking the responsibility of the cash transactions in his own hands. Mr. Wallis occasionally checked the work of both, bestowing his approbation or disapproval as the case might be.

Under Alfred and Geoffrey, principally employed as light porters and general servants, Wilson and Hargreaves each did his best to forward his employer's interests, at any rate it *seemed* so. Wilson was a Yorkshireman, rough but honest, uncouth in dialect, but polished at heart. He was one of those who seldom joked—somehow he had a notion that it was n't dignified. He often growled, but never bit, and, unlike Sam Hargreaves, he was universally liked. Wilson had even now attracted the attention of Mr. Wallis, who said with truth, that "he was always at work, always willing, and never broke his word." Wilson did not like Hargreaves nor was there any love lost between them. The latter had once been caught about the premises in a suspicious place, after hours, but still if he had not accounted for the fact satisfactorily, yet the explanation was plausible. Again, Wilson had several times missed various little matters from the office and the works, but tho' he thought he knew who the culprit was, he could find no evidence to support him. However he would "bide his time" and see what the future brought forth. The reader knows Sam Hargreaves sufficiently to be aware, that a little attention would not be lost upon him. He had *marked* George Wilson as an individual with whom, at some future day he meant to square accounts.

Both the porters loved the sons of their master; but for reasons widely different. Wilson acted as a bulldog protector, Hargreaves as a sort of boa-constrictor, embracing, only to crush you. Yet Hargreaves called this feeling, love and respect, because, as he argued with his conscience, he meant to confer some benefit upon those who cared to abide by his counsels. He had already gained the ear of Geoffrey in many ways, but Alfred, while kind and far from proud, gave the porter to understand that he could never hope to be

reckoned as a friend. So Alfred was unfortunately 'marked,' too.

It was on an evening not more than a week after the occurrences related in the last chapter, that Alfred and Geoffrey were seated at their desks, waiting for the exit of the workmen before closing the doors of the factory. The giant steam engine, setting in motion a thousand shafts, ceased its strong throbs ; the whirr of wheels had ended, and the usual abode of noise and racket had given place to a silence the more profound from its contrast to the din that it had so suddenly superseded. One by one the workmen left their benches and repaired homeward, till at last the two brothers were the only souls in the place, with the exception of Wilson and Hargreaves, who had several other little duties to perform ere they could leave.

"Will you see all locked up safely?" asked Alfred of his brother.

"Yes; as soon as I have balanced up this account."

"And you will be home to tea very soon?"

"I don't know. I suppose I shall, though," said Geoffrey, hesitatingly.

"Do n't let any doubt rest upon the subject," mildly urged Alfred. "Surely no place can have any greater attractions for you than your own home."

"Oh, bother! do n't begin preaching me a long sermon. My head aches awfully!"

"Whether you are angry or not Geoffrey, I *must* urge upon you this, that you are growing as it were, more and more alienated from home and those whom you should love most. Besides your language is becoming coarser every day. You know "evil communications corrupt good manners;" does it apply to your case, brother?"

"Now I'll tell you what it is, once for all, I *won't* be lectured by you or anybody else. What I say, I mean, so do n't trouble me any more, if you please."

Alfred turned away sorrowfully, for he well knew that in such a reply there was no encouragement for continuing the conversation. He left the factory, and as he wandered through the meadows towards Rose Cottage, he descried at a distance the visages of Jack Jenkins, Harry Harland, and three others, who were laughing, joking and halloing, as they wended their way towards the factory, now at no great distance from them.

"Geoffrey will not be home to tea, I am sure," sighed Alfred. "God help him!"

Geoffrey put down his pen as soon as Alfred had gone. The ledger-balance seemed entirely forgotten for the time being. He was thinking! thinking! and as he lifted his head, his countenance wore a troubled expression, combined with doubt and perplexity. He had just a faint idea that he was not exactly acting rightly in spending his evenings at Longford. The temptation to go there was great, for he loved the excitement he found always waiting for him. Boon companions were there, and he could throw off the mask of comparative steadiness in which he was obliged to clothe himself at L——. At Longford he was himself; at home he was not. These thoughts ran quickly through his brain, and arguments for both sides of the question came plentifully. He was just wavering between good and evil, and so stubborn was he, that which ever side he laid hold of, he would indubitably adhere to, if left to himself.

Hargreaves saw him as he passed out, and mentally congratulated himself upon the progress that his scheme was making. Outside the building, he, like Alfred, saw the five young men coming towards the factory, and he was inwardly glad thereat. As Wilson was passing out, he stepped into the counting-house and ventured to speak.

"Beg pardon, Mr. Geoffrey, but are you quite well?"

"Yes, Wilson, I never was in better health, why do you ask?"

"'Cos you don't look well. You know, sir, there's disease of the mind as well as the body, and of the two, I do really think that the first is the worst."

"I cannot see your drift, Wilson. What are you aiming at?"

"Why, sir, perhaps you would be offended if I were to speak out boldly. But be assured, that if I didn't love you, and all belonging to you, I would n't bother myself at all."

"With that excuse, you may speak openly and boldly. Now what is it?"

"Why then, sir, I've noticed that since you've begun going to Longford, you ain't been so happy and cheerful as you used to be. And I want to warn you, sir, that some people who go to that hole where your companions assemble, are of very bad character, so I

can scarcely think that my master's son is in safe hands there."

" You are taking advantage of the licence I have given you, Wilson!"

" Yes, sir; but it's for your good sir. I'd prove my wishes for your safety by defending you at any time, no matter what the risk."

" Thank you, Wilson. Is there anything more you want to say?"

" No sir, nobbut I thought I would just ease my mind a bit like. You ain't offended?"

" Not I, rest assured of that. And now, good-night, Wilson."

" Good night, sir. I've fastened all the shutters sir, except your own. Good-night, sir!"

The five young men were close at hand, as Wilson emerged from the factory door, and he dodged back quickly into the counting-house and said "they're coming master Geoffrey, do n't go with 'em, pray do n't!" then he made his exit as quickly as possible.

Poor Geoffrey! Lacking resolution enough to decide for the right, and manfully to face the tempter in whatever form he might come. Again he began thinking, and again he felt as undecided as ever. Here was Pleasure on the one side, pleading with her eloquent, her delusive, her hollow voice. On the other *Home* pleaded for itself with all the earnestness of truth, advancing contentment, solid happiness, consciousness of right and duty as her arguments. The latter seemed to Geoffrey as dry, uninteresting, lacking excitement, while the former held out to him all he desired, though Pleasure took good care to conceal the sharp hook, the poisoned sting which lay hidden beneath the tempting bait. He was halting between two opinions, and again his head bent over his desk, trying to discover in the ink spots and scribblings, some solution to the problem. At last he seemed to have arrived at the course he ought to pursue, and he raised his head, while his face wore an expression of resolution. At this moment, the countenances of Jack Jenkins—rollicking Jack as he was termed by the clique—and company, became visible at the office window. Jack, seeing the expression upon Geoffrey's face, put up his coat collar, and assuming a drawling tone said:—

" Behold, brethren! how deeply we are engaged in

"serious study," then burst into a laugh. "Geoffrey my boy, you look as if you had a fit of the blues. What's the matter?"

"Aye! What's in the wind now? surely this is not Geoffrey Wallis, the life and soul of our merry meetings at Longford!" said Harry Harland, catching up the strain.

"Or the gentleman who has so often sung us "Away with melancholy," "Here's to the maiden of bashful fifteen," and a host of others," followed up Angus James.

"Or the "Young man from the country," (whom no one could get over,) submitting to be taken possession of by thoughts sublime," said another.

"Nor he who used to sing "We are all jolly good fellows" with such gusto, added a fifth.

"Gentlemen! have you quite done; if so, I think it's my turn now," said Geoffrey.

"Oh, yes; quite done. Now what have you to say, Mr. Melancholy," said Jack.

"Simply this, that if you've come for me to join you to-night, I am very sorry to say, that you stand a strong chance of being disappointed," Geoffrey said, rather nervously.

"Disappointed! why what's the matter. Has some one offended you?" said Angus.

"Or anybody been preaching to you?"

"Perhaps he thinks we ain't good enough company for him to mix with."

"Or peradventure he contemneth the matters pertaining to this life."

"The most likely thing is that he's turned teetotaler. Lor! you'd be a capital acquisition for the water pump lecturer, now would n't you?" tittered Jack.

"Well, I am thinking of—don't be alarmed—not being a teetotaler, but for the present, of giving up my evening visits to Longford. In fact I'm quite determined."

"Are you?" said Jack, winking his eye at the others, as much as to say, "I know what stuff he's made of, take no heed of what he says, it's all nonsense."

"Well, I'd like to see you on a temperance platform, giving an oration. Perhaps you would n't mind delivering your first 'spout' at the 'Green Man' in Longford. You might preach it from out the chair where you last sat a few nights ago, when you asked

everybody to 'fill up,' and not to be afraid of the liquor." This was a stinger from Harry.

"And you might try to convince Andrew Dean; that *would* be a victory indeed." Geoffrey shuddered as he heard the name; it called up to his recollection the dying moments of Andrew Dean's mother, and he could scarcely help thinking, in his inmost thoughts, that he had a hand in her death, and in the partial ruin of her son. How many more reflections of this sort might he not have to bear in the future, if he gave way now.

"Why you'll be having water on the brain, if indeed your brains are not all leaving you," said Jack. "I suppose we shall hear you going about with the temperance procession (if there ever is one) singing, 'For we have signed the temperance pledge a long time ago-o-o! For we have signed the temperance pledge a long time ago-o-o!'"

It was plain that Geoffrey's resolution appeared to be giving way under this railery.

Could he have looked into the vista of the FUTURE, and seen how much of his happiness depended upon his courage under temptation, his tongue would not have hesitated for a single instant; and if those young men could have done the same, and seen the rugged path they would have to traverse in carrying out their non-temperance principles, they would have signed the pledge at once.

Geoffrey had been their lure, and now they tempted the tempter.

"Why can't you let a fellow have his own way for once?" Geoffrey urged. It was the last trial of resolution to have it's own way.

"Do you want to be laughed at in Longford? Do you want to be pointed at and scorned by those who have hitherto respected you?" said Jack.

"Are your talents to be buried and is your jocosity to be entombed? Don't you mean to give us the benefit of your versatility?" Harry blandly insinuated.

It was the most successful remonstrance of all, that of flattery. Harland knew Geoffrey's weak point, love of adulation; it only wanted this completely to overthrow any determination to desert his companions, on Geoffrey's part. The latter forgot to put the esteem of the good, the respect of those from whom respect is valuable, the love of his

own kin, and last though not least, the approbation of God, against the paltry argument Jack had last adduced.

"Come along Geoffrey. Close up this big shop of your's, and away with these blue imps. There's a jolly set waiting for you at the "green man," and the night will be a complete blank without you," said Jack. (Better then, if Geoffrey had stayed away). "Andrew Dean means to be there for the first time after his mothers death, and in fact they have all assembled solely with the hope of enjoying your society."

"Very well, then, *I'll go*, replied Geoffrey. And he forthwith took up his hat, closed the office window, locked the door, and set out with his companions.

Ah ! Geoffrey, many a young man has done the same as yourself, has been *laughed* out of his good resolutions, and has had to pay dearly for his irresolution. Scores of young men can painfully refer to that period and say, as they have often said to us, "I date my ruin back to that time; it commenced then, and it has never stopped since." They began by sailing round the outer edge of the whirlpool, which was safe, comparatively speaking, and pleasant in its slow gyrations; but they ended by being drawn nearer the seething centre, in which, once engulphed, there was, and is, no retreat. Of what avail then will be your cries ! of what use *then* will be your lamentations ! There is an awful and overwhelming power wrapping you round ; you are whirled onward with fearful rapidity, and nothing short of a miracle can save you. It is dangerous for you to launch yourself into the circle. You *may* do as others have done before you, sail round the outside and come back again in safety. But look further towards the middle, and see how many have trusted to their own power, and have been deceived ; see how many *meant* to come back but now find it to be an impossibility !

* * * *

Longford was not a very great distance away from the works, and before they had reached the town, Geoffrey Wallis was what his companions termed "in tune," that is, his spirits were as good as ever ; and he was inwardly laughing at himself for his previous despondency. Of his half-formed resolutions not a

vestige remained, in fact, now that he had made up his mind to follow the course which he considered, after all, the most *agreeable* one, a strong reaction set in, and his spirits overflowed. His companions saw this, and anticipated a merry night of it.

But they did not anticipate that it was to be an eventful one to Geoffrey Wallis, the turning point of his whole life. The reader will find that it was so.

The "Green Man" was the head hotel in Longford; a 'respectable house,' as it was termed. At this inn these young men had hitherto met, and enjoyed meetings similar to those noble (?) institutions peculiar to large towns, denominated "free and easy's." That at the "Green Man" was kept select, that is, none but friends of the young men who generally assembled there were admitted to the room they occupied.

On entering, the six young men shook hands with the landlord; whose face, we need scarcely say, was radiant with pleasure, (not at meeting the visitors) but at the prospect of quitting his liquors. Indeed, this clique formed his very best customers, and paid him very well during the time they stayed in his house. To Geoffrey Wallis he gave an especially hearty greeting, seeing that if his presence was discontinued, these meetings would decrease in number, if indeed, they did not cease altogether.

The visitors walked upstairs, and entered a long commodious apartment where several young men had already assembled, from all of whom came a rough but hearty welcome, as soon as 'the six' made their appearance. The latter were no sooner seated, than one young man got up and commenced the proceedings by saying:—"Gentlemen, I have no need to say that the person, above all others, who ought to occupy the position of chairman, this evening, is our valued friend, Mr. Geoffrey Wallis. We will, therefore, ask him kindly to honour the company by filling the chair, as he has so efficiently done many evenings before." The gentlemen all applauded; not for the speaker, because that gentleman always said the same words precisely, and if he had altered them in the slightest degree, everybody would have been amazed.

On assuming his high office (?), Geoffrey said:—"Friends! I don't need to tell you that we are here tonight, as we always have been, for the pleasure of a little social intercourse, and the enjoyment of a quiet glass.

(Cheers.) We mean to do the thing respectably, and in moderation. (Hear! hear! from an Irishman who was never known to leave the table without getting drunk.) We mean to enjoy ourselves rationally. (Faint applause from a young man whom three glasses were sure to upset.) And now, gentlemen, without occupying your time further, I will sit down, merely intimating that the waiter is at your command, and will try to fulfil all your wishes."

Orders were thereupon delivered to that functionary, who very soon set various beverages before his customers, differing according to the particular notion of each individual. After each had formally sipped, the chairman was about to rise upon his feet again, when an interruption occurred, consequent upon the advent of Andrew Dean. There was a low token of recognition which ran round the room, but no sound or greeting escaped the lips of Geoffrey Wallis. He alone was dumb. Andrew had not improved in appearance since the death of his mother. Though he had thrown Care out of his small cottage, gaunt Poverty came peering into the dwelling. If he clutched pleasure to drown recollection, starvation was still hovering round him. The facts might either mar or make him. If it grew into stolid indifference, the future would indeed be a blank. If, out of it, grew courage, manliness, resolution to combat life's ills, then he would be saved. There was no self-denying mother now, to grant his every wish, and sacrifice all at the will of the spendthrift son; she was dead, and worse than all, he had killed her. There was only one remedy for the stern recollection which suggested itself to him, and that was oblivion. So he mixed with the gay, laughed louder, drank deeper, sung more lustily than the rest. But he could not banish the gaunt spectre of his dead mother. In the midst of boisterous hilarity, her thin, pale, wan face would occur to him—only to stimulate him in his recklessness. More than anything, he feared being alone, and so was seldom to be found at home; always out. He was to be seen in the streets, talking to anyone who would spend their time with him, trying in this, and other ways, to smother the loud and warning voice of conscience.

Andrew quietly acknowledged the murmur of recognition which had greeted him, and then, turning to a neighbour, commenced a lively conversation. But as

soon as "order" was called, and Andrew's glass was filled, complete quiet reigned paramount.

"In my capacity as chairman, I beg to call upon Jack Jenkins for one of his choicest ditties : let him do his best, and nobody can blame him."

Jack knew that no denials were taken, so clearing his throat, he sang as follows :—

Let the cynic sneer and laugh, As my jovial glass I quaff ; Let teetotalers abstain, But a drinker I'll remain. Not drinking overmuch— (For the pledge I'd give to such), But you'll all agree, I think, That we love a little drink.	Let the preachers rant and roar, Sermons plenty they've in store ; But, without a little drop, In their sermons some would stop. So we'll pass the jovial bottle ; When the contents wet your throttle Then you'll all agree, I think, That we love a little drink.
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Everybody forthwith illustrated the undeniable fact by taking sundry mouthfuls from their respective tumblers, Andrew Dean, Jack Jenkins, and Harry Harland being most conspicuous. Geoffrey did not indulge very much ; an occasional sip was all he took, and it was plain that one of his glasses would outlive two or three of the others.

To the utter astonishment of all, Andrew Dean volunteered to sing a song, prefacing its commencement by saying :—"Mr. Chairman, I want to explain that this is a little ditty which I saw in a shop window, and having seen it, I bought it for the edification of this most enlightened and intelligent audience. It will amuse you, I know, and how very antagonistic to the song with which we have been favoured, you shall hear. But, in order that I may preserve my gravity, I beg of you to restrain your mirth until I've done."

Drink, drink, blithely and merrily,
 Drink and be merry as long as you may ;
 Sip, sip, gaily and cheerly,
 None of you know what a price you must pay.
 Quaff, quaff, deeply with jollity,
 Let us be happy so long as we've breath ;
 Drink, drink, deep of frivolity,
 Think not of sorrow, of penance, of death.
 Drink, drink, let us be happy, boys,
 Drink, for it drowns every care we may know ;
 Sip, sip, conscience hath ne'er a voice,
 Softly she speaketh, and onward we go.
 Down, down, down in society,
 Lower and lower the victim doth fall ;
 Life, life is full of variety,
 Pleasure is pain, and the drink is but gall.

"Why, what the d—ce makes you sing us such a song as that ?" asked Geoffrey.

A hearty shout of laughter at once greeted the singer, when his voice ceased.

"Now, I told you that I'd make some fun for you. Does it matter what kind of song it is, so long

as it causes a little mirth? Waiter, fill my glass again," said Andrew.

Songs being the order of the night just then, each had to contribute his share towards the evening's amusement; and any one failing to do so, no matter what the excuse might be, had to stand "glasses round," as the term went. Few would run the risk of being thus punished, and as may naturally be supposed, in many instances more noise than melody was produced. After each had contributed his quota, Geoffrey again stood upon his feet, and called upon certain young men in the company for recitations. Some of these were comic, some nonsensical, not a few of them were filthy, and could not have been repeated at home without causing a blush to tinge the cheek of the pure and innocent; but they were all applauded, and the broader the joke, the louder the approbation. Toasts came next, and the notable feature in these was that anything, no matter how trivial the subject might be, served as an excuse for swallowing another glass. "The Royal Family" surely would not thank this conclave of half-inebriated young men for their display of loyalty. Pot-enthusiasm is too shallow to deserve thanks from anyone. If loyalty cannot shew itself except uprising, with a well-filled glass to swallow, then surely the feeling is scarcely worth recognising. The words which issue from the mouth may be pure and noble, but the liquor which washes them away is scarcely worthy of their society. By the time that a dozen or more toasts had been gone through, two-thirds of the company were nearly inebriated, and as we have no desire to dwell upon this scene longer than it is requisite, we shall pass on. Let us not forget Andrew Dean, who sits up in a corner, laughing and joking almost like an idiot. Who would guess what he is just now uttering?

"Angus, my boy, lend me five shillings, will you? I'm out of 'tin' just now."

"Really, Andrew, I'd be very glad, but you see—you see—fact is—I ain't got it."

A lie! The truth was, that he knew there would be no loan in the case; it would be *giving*.

"Jack! Perhaps—eh?—perhaps you can lend me a crown?" said he to Jenkins.

"Declined with thanks," as the editor said, when he stuffed some poetry in the waste-paper basket. Fact

is, I'm hard up, myself, just now, else I wouldn't mind. But whar are you after, that you—you ain't got money of your own?"

"After? Heaven knows. I'm as poor as a church mouse, and not likely to grow any richer. But what matter? Ha! ha! hang care, it killed a cat!" Poor fellow. Andrew Dean was getting desperate; not a penny in the world; friends fast deserting him, at any rate, none caring to help him; what was the use of living? So he thought; and he silently left the company, out into the dark, cold, frosty evening. Onwards! he scarcely knew whither. What a strange mixture of two extremes! Those of jollity and despondency, he must either be at the height of one or the other; there was no medium for him.

Back to our company! It was now getting near midnight, and Geoffrey Wallis had not swallowed more than three glasses of gin and water, a mere nothing to what was done by the others. Some one now proposed that they should adjourn to the billiard-room, and permission having been asked of the chairman, and granted, they all repaired to a large room, well lighted, containing a handsome billiard-table. Geoffrey had never participated in this sort of amusement; but now, by the strong persuasion of several friends, and from the excitement consequent upon the *moderate* quantity he had taken, he consented to play for a small amount.

Others had played and won, and the same success seemed open to him. This was partly the lure. He was clever at other things, and surely would not fail in this—an additional incentive. He was fond of excitement, and here, most certainly it was to be found. It was not strange that when once the desire to play came, all the arguments in favour of it should present themselves to his mind, the adverse ones being kept in the background.

He played, the company around being comprised of the same young men who had surrounded him the rest of the evening. They had all brought their glasses with them, and their share of the amusement consisted in making bets as to the results of the contests then going on. Geoffrey played for small sums, but up to the fifth game, he invariably lost. He played another one, and won. Another, and lost; yet another, and

lost again. It was observable that Geoffrey had ordered his glass to be filled several times, and seemed to be forgetting his usual mode of procedure. Again he played, and this time came off victorious. But he had used up all his own money, and was now without cash. Yet not so! In a pocket-book, he had £100, which he meant to have delivered over to his father as soon as he reached home. Should he trench upon that? He might double the sum before the night was past, or rather the morning. He could redeem what he had himself lost, and if the worst came to the worst, he could borrow from Alfred. Again, all the one-sided arguments presented themselves. Maddened by the extra glasses he had taken, Geoffrey did not hesitate long. He played for £10, and won. Again for £20, and lost. He drank deeper than ever, and his eyes glowed with an unnatural excitement. Again he played for £40, but the ivory balls seemed leagued in enmity against him. So also was the player, Geoffrey thought. Angus James was his opponent; a tall, raw-boned, gaunt Scotchman, as fond of whiskey as a donkey of thistles. Geoffrey was almost in despair, and was now really inebriated, scarcely articulating plainly. Angus saw this, and he knew, cunning rogue, that a tremulous hand and unsteady sight were not likely to do much towards retrieving Geoffrey's laurels. The latter was now more desperate than ever, and determined to risk his fate on the remaining £50. But while the game was on, he panted with suppressed anxiety. He thought everything depended upon it; he little knew how much. He tried to open wide his eyes, from which the light of intelligence had merged into the stare of semi-idiotcy, little qualified to win such a game. The last ball had rolled, and Geoffrey Wallis once more lost!

"You're a swindler!" he wildly exclaimed, as the cue left his hands.

"What, sir! Take care what you say, or I'll make you repent it," said James.

"I repeat it! You're as big a swindler as ever disgraced Newgate." Geoffrey scarcely knew what he was saying, and amid the clamour of twenty voices, all remonstrating at the attitude now being assumed by the tall Scotchman, Angus James pulled off his coat, rolled up his shirt-sleeves, and politely asked Geoffrey to "come on."

Cries of "It is'nt a fair match," "We'll have no fighting here," "Call the landlord," "Go into him, Geoffrey," &c., were heard on all sides. Wallis was not a coward, and though no match for James, he at once prepared for hostilities. A ring was formed, the door was locked, and the fray commenced. We are not versed in the mysteries of fighting, nor have we any desire to be enlightened. Blows were showered fast and thick; when a loud voice was heard at the door, and kicks at the panels were plentifully bestowed. No one took any notice, and the Scotchman struck out with his bony fists and brawny arms. At last, he hit Geoffrey a fearful blow on the eye, and the lad fell upon the floor with a loud "thud." James, like a coward, even now would have struck him, but the door of the room was burst in with a loud crash, and a man leaped over the prostrate body of Geoffrey, and seized James by the throat, pinioning him with the power of a lion. It was Wilson.

"Now, thou scamp! What, thou'd hit a chap when he's down? Thou cowardly blackguard," said Wilson, shaking the Scotchman at every word. "Thou shall have a month or two in the county jail, and see how thou'll like that. And you," said he, turning round upon the astonished young men, "You are fine samples of a rising generation, arn't you? I know you all, and I've seen that which will do injury to most of you. Go home and mend your ways, or even I will make you repent it."

Coward-like, most of them shrunk away; Wilson, Geoffrey, and Angus James alone remained.

"Now! it's thy turn," said Wilson to James, releasing his grasp, "Get thee gone, or I'll kick thee out, and if it wasn't that my poor master is almost as bad as t'rest for coming to such a devil's-hole as this, I'd have thee up before t'magistrates, that I would."

James knew very well that this threat could be carried out to his cost, so he thought discretion the better part of valour, and at once availed himself of his release.

Wilson now applied himself to the task of restoring Geoffrey, in which he was assisted by the landlord, who had now become seriously alarmed for the reputation of his house.

"You won't mention this matter to anyone? Here's a ten pound note, if that's of any use to you," blandly

insinuated the landlord, presenting the note, tempting in its crispiness.

"Mention it? Don't fear. Unless some of them young chaps blabs, I shan't. It's far too disgraceful for me to care about spreading it. But keep your money, I'd be very sorry to touch what is earned at the price of such misery as I've seen to-night. Well, Master Geoffrey, how are you now? Better, eh? Come, come, try and get upon your feet!"

* * * * *

And where was Andrew Dean? He had passed out into the cold midnight air, and with his hands pressed to his fevered forehead, scarcely knew whether he had possession of reason or not. At times he could think—that was the worst of it. Oblivion would have been better. Looking backwards, he saw nothing to console him; looking forwards, he could only see a dark prospect of poverty and wretchedness. And the present? It was worse, far worse than an useless existence. Friends had deserted him, or if they still remained so in name, they were not so in reality. They say that the best test of a man's friendship is to ask him to lend you a sovereign. Andrew had tried this test, and had met with the bitter experience of its truthfulness. He had not power to look *upward*, and ask for strength and aid from thence. He had never trusted to that source, and sought it not now. He came to a low-parapeted bridge that crossed a broad, deep river, which glided past Longford. He leant over that bridge, and gazed into the moving waters, but they gave no encouragement to his thoughts; he only saw reflected, the shining eyes of heaven set in the arch of azure, glaring at him as if in quiet reproof. Even this maddened him, for it hinted a consciousness of reproof being necessary. A thought suggested itself to him which, from its very nature, caused him to recoil from his own imagination. Yet he was to be found looking down into the deep waters, rolling on so majestically. To be engulphed therein would be to meet with a quiet death. Why not? Is there anyone to regret him, is there anyone to care? Yes! there is an angel who watches him from above; *she did* care for him once, *when he heeded not*. There is the tribunal of heaven to face, and no mercy for he who comes before it unbidden! The distant clock, from the church-tower at

Longford, sounds twelve. "Why should not my life end with this day?" thought Andrew. We could suggest something better—Why should not another and a better day begin with you? But that did not occur to Andrew; and after a few moments more, spent in thought, in which the line—"Anywhere! Anywhere! Out of the world," continually suggested itself, Andrew leaped upon the parapet, and shouted: "Mother! Mother! I come." Aye! but where? Not to join the regions of the redeemed; suicides are rejected there. The ingrate who throws his life in the face of his Great Maker, dwells not in heaven. Ere Andrew could fulfil his purpose, a strong arm dragged him down.

"Art thou such a coward, that thou refuses to bear thy part in life's struggles?" said Wilson, who was supporting Geoffrey with one arm, and with the other had saved Andrew.

Andrew had regained his senses now. He shuddered at the thought of where he might have been. He thanked Wilson earnestly, and then walked along with them towards home, opening his heart to them, and laying bare his utter helplessness and poverty. He in turn had to listen to Geoffrey's story, from which, however, all mention of the £100 was carefully excluded.

Thus talking, they progressed slowly homewards. Geoffrey's eye was black and swollen, while he was himself extremely weak. But even this had not completely sobered him. The fumes of the liquor were still hovering round his brain, and he spoke foolishly and incoherently.

Andrew Dean went home, knelt down and prayed! Then he burst into tears. Out of these emblems of repentance grew a mind of giant stature, one which astonished the world by its brilliance; out of the ashes of ruin grew the foundation of a nobler and more useful structure.

* * * *

Let us now peep in at Rose Cottage, previous to the arrival of Geoffrey and Wilson. To all, save Alfred, Geoffrey's absence was a matter of indifference. His presence at home in the evening was so unfrequent, that there would have been more astonishment manifested had he taken his brother's advice, and spent the

night amongst his relations. It is strange that this constant repetition of the unsocial act did not provoke some enquiry on the part of his parents. But their creed was, provided he did no wrong, (that is, brought no discredit upon them) he was at liberty to do as he chose, and with two or three exceptions, he had hitherto always made his appearance at home in tolerable time.

On the particular night in question, the incidents of which we have just narrated, the whole family were engaged in conversation, or in various amusements, until the clock struck ten. That should have been the hour of Geoffrey's arrival, and while little Jenny was imagining his footsteps could be heard in the distance, he was, at that particular moment, urging the company at "The Green Man" to "give their orders." The time passed on, and the inmates of Rose Cottage began to be uneasy.

"I wonder what can keep Geoffrey, this evening? Those companions at Longford are becoming too attractive, I fear," said Mr. Wallis.

"He will return soon, without doubt," said Mrs. Wallis. "Geoffrey is far too steady to exceed a reasonable time, I am sure."

"Had we not better have prayers, mamma? I should like to retire," said Jenny.

"We will wait a few moments longer, then if Geoffrey does not come, you may read them."

A quarter of an hour more elapsed, and something akin to surprise was manifest in the expression of Mr. Wallis' face. Still he kept silent.

"Where is the book, Jenny? Oh! I remember it is in my bedroom. Nurse, would you mind taking a candle and bringing it down to me?"

"Yes, I'll fetch it, mam." Mrs. Hargreaves quietly took up a light, and went upstairs. And as she went, she began thinking. There was no time like the present for executing the commands of the man she feared. She entered the room, and did not seek long before she found the key. Hastily, and with a trembling hand, she drew a piece of white wax from her pocket, and heating the key slightly in the flame of the candle, then pressed it upon the wax, and withdrawing it, found what Sam Hargreaves wanted—a bold and exact indentation. But she trembled in every limb, and the more because she was becoming an

accomplice in she knew not what, against those who had always been her best friends. She almost felt inclined to melt down the wax, and disobey her husband. But he had threatened, and Mrs. Hargreaves knew that he did not waste words in idle vaunting. Seizing the book, she made a rapid descent to the drawing-room again.

"I suppose the book must have been mislaid, Nurse. Had you to seek it?"

"Why yes—no—that is, I had to look for it some time." The lie, or the cause of the delay, called up an unusual flush to her cheeks.

Those assembled prostrated themselves at the family altar; and still, at the conclusion, Geoffrey had not arrived, and it was deemed expedient to enquire for him.

"I am very uneasy, Nurse. Just knock at Wilson's door, as you pass to your own home, and tell him that I desire him to step over to Longford, and see about his young master."

"I'll tell him, mum. Not as how I thinks 'at Master Geoffrey 'll come to any harm. I'd trust him with the best o' folks in Longford."

"I'll go as well, if you have no objections, mamma."

"You, Alfred! Certainly not. Wilson will do all that is necessary, and I have no desire that you should risk yourself about a mere nothing. I do not doubt but that Geoffrey has forgotten the hour; I fear nothing more."

"God grant your conclusion may be correct, mother. As you will not let me go, and I can be of no use here, I will bid you good-night."

Alfred retired, and was soon followed by Jenny, whilst Mr. and Mrs. Wallis determined to await the return of Wilson and Geoffrey.

Time flies but wearily when we are on the tip-toe of expectancy. Seconds glide slowly into minutes, and minutes into hours—sluggishly, as if mocking the nervous restlessness of those who watch their measured flight.

It was two o'clock ere they heard unsteady footsteps coming up the walk. Mr. Wallis had now really worked himself into a passion. He had not given it voice, that was not his way; but it slumbered like a hidden volcano.

The footsteps came nearer, and the door was thrown

open before a knock could be given, and a flood of light streamed through the doorway upon the figures of Wilson and Geoffrey. The latter, in a semi-intoxicated condition, leaning on the arm of the faithful servant. Mr. Wallis seemed paralysed, his power of speech gone, and he dashed upstairs without uttering a word. His wife covered her face with her hands, hiding the crimson blush of shame for her offspring. As the two men entered the house, a mocking voice was heard, saying :—

"Aye! Aye! Bob knows what it'll all end in. Bob ain't lived for nothing. Bob could tell things that wise men don't know. We shall see! We shall see!"

CHAPTER IV.

"A stubborn heart, an iron will,
With blackest thoughts the heart can fill;
They stop at nought; if up, if down,
They laugh to scorn Dame Fortune's frown."

WITH what little glimmerings of reason Geoffrey Wallis had left, he began to feel ashamed. So long as he was surrounded by company, the voice of conscience was drowned; and the excitement of the game, and the drink that prompted it, had caused him to forget entirely that he was expected at home. Indeed, had he recollect ed, it is more probable that as strong allurements were on the spot, and indefinite remonstrance was at a distance, he would have laughed at the chance of the latter. But now he was alone, and he awoke in the morning with a mixture of shame and stubbornness. Shame he felt *himself*, but meant nobody else to see; for others, he reserved an exhibition of his stubborn nature. Of the night before, and all its incidents, he had a distinct and painful recollection. He remembered "The Green Man," and through his troubled dreams he had caught glimpses of Andrew Dean and his mother, and the gaming-table; again felt the loss of the £100, and the awful responsibility it entailed upon him, and had opened his eyes with the laughing mockery of the poor idiot, Bob Rollinson, ringing ominously in his ears. We have said that he felt his sense of loneliness, it was an acute, uncomfortable, isolated feeling; one with which he knew none in that house would sympathise: one to which he could not apply the antidote of good company. He

was alone, and would have to brave remonstrances, jeers, scorn and laughter on all sides. His boasted strength of purpose had turned out to be a myth; his confidence in himself had been weighed in the balance, and found wanting. The reputation for sobriety, which he had taken so much care to preserve untarnished, had now collapsed; it was an air-bubble, that melted into nothing at the slightest pressure. The doctrine of 'moderation,' with which he had hitherto met all meddlers with his glass, would now be a weapon in their hands—a taunt to be used against him. More than all, and it was a fact his father was not likely to forget, he had tarnished and injured the reputation of the family; though that father would never be troubled with the thought that he himself had helped to produce the result.

Geoffrey tossed about upon his bed, and felt very unwilling to present himself below. The first person who entered his bedroom was his brother Alfred, at sight of whom he felt his heart become hard as stone, probably from the knowledge that it ought to be penitent.

"How are you this morning, Geoffrey?"

"As well as can be expected. I suppose that's the answer you anticipate?"

"I expect only the truth. I have no right to catechise you, I know. But still, as you cannot surely have a more fitting confidante than your own brother, I will ask you to tell me about your proceedings last evening."

Geoffrey recollects that Alfred was probably to be of material use to him in the matter of the £100, so that he judged it best to tell all. This he did with a strange mixture of vindictiveness, sorrow, and stubbornness. The glimpses of sorrow he manifested were so rare, and so adulterated with passion, that few would have discovered them at all. In his narration, Geoffrey merely mentioned that he had lost some money, but never even hinted at the source from which he had procured that money.

"Well, brother, who is right, you or I, in the different courses we have adopted?"

"Why, you have adopted one extreme, but except in this case, which shall not occur again, I have not adopted the other extreme."

"But you have done wrong through your moderation?"

"Well, if I have been a fool this time, it is not necessary that I should sign the pledge and thus make myself a fool of an opposite kind."

"You flatter me; yet, have I ever made a fool of myself!"

"Not as regards drink; though you have not been very wise in abjuring it for ever. But to change the subject; Alf, I want you to lend me £100; I know you have some money, you have been more saving than me."

"A consequence of the 'extreme,' which you say makes a fool of me."

"Never mind, you have the money; that's the subject at present. Now, I want you to lend me the sum I name; I will repay it in a few months."

"And for what purpose do you want it?" said Alfred.

"That's nothing to do with the matter. I borrow, you lend; that's the sum total of the whole affair." Geoffrey's fit of mildness was fast disappearing.

"If you tell me what you want it for, I may perhaps lend you it. But I most distinctly refuse to do so, unless you tell me."

Tell his brother that, for the moment, he had been a criminal, nay, that he *was* one, amenable to the laws of the land; that in addition to the crime of drunkenness and the sin of gaming, he now added that of thief! Never!

"I cannot tell you—I will not tell you; and if you won't do me this favour unconditionally, so be it; I beg no longer."

"It is your stubbornness that keeps the money from you; but what I have said, I mean, though I would have been glad to oblige you."

He left the room. Geoffrey Wallis was far too proud and self-willed to beg more earnestly for the boon he craved. But the thoughts his want of success occasioned, were of the most painful description. What was he now to do? This was Thursday, and on Saturday at the furthest, his father would check the cash account for the week, and there would of necessity be £100 short. With such unpleasant thoughts in his head, he dressed, and prepared to descend, with an obstinate determination to defend himself against those who found fault with him.

The family were just sitting down to breakfast, and Geoffrey took his place at the table without uttering a word. The meal passed off in the midst of a por-

tentious silence, and at its conclusion, Mr. Wallis arose, and said to his eldest son, "Follow me; I wish to speak to you in the library."

Arrived there, the father motioned his son to a seat, which he took nervously, but still quailing very little under the parent's scrutiny.

"I suppose you know what I have to say, even before it is said?"

"I think I do. You wish to blame me for what I could not help."

"To give an excuse before an accusation has been made, shows that there must be a feeling of guilt. What do you think of your conduct last evening?"

"I do not attempt to palliate the excess into which I was drawn by the influence of others. I hope you will overlook the matter, this once."

"Will the people of S——— overlook it? No. Is it likely that a father whose pride you have wounded, should overlook it? Is it probable that, at his bidding, I should forgive my son for a sin which has caused me to be ashamed of him?"

"You have not heard all the circumstances of the case."

"Tell me them briefly, then. You shall be heard before you are judged."

"The company I was in used every exertion to make me drink; and under strong excitement, I went beyond my usual bounds."

"A shallow excuse, and if it is a fact, as I hear it is, that you are the presiding spirit over these assemblies, I very much doubt its truthfulness."

"Father, you surely would not accuse me of a lie!"

How bold is iniquity! So bold, that it dare cover an untruth with the pure, spotless, innocent garb of truth. Geoffrey Wallis had done this, and more.

"I accuse you of nothing but of being drunk. *That* I saw with my own eyes. Now let me tell you, once for all, that if you cannot take your glass or two *like a man* (?), and stop there, that is, if you are ever again seen in a state of inebriation, I disown you, and you must seek an asylum elsewhere."

It seemed a solemn mockery, thus to condemn a young man, and yet to sanction his continuance in that which had necessitated his condemnation. But "Can the blind lead the blind!" Mr. Wallis had not the

power to give such advice that the recurrence of a similar scene would be made impossible.

On returning to the drawing-room, Geoffrey found the Reverend H. Sleigh, who had assumed a reproving expression appropriate for the occasion. Geoffrey saw this, and though he had taken the remonstrances of his father pretty quietly, he was not disposed to be as respectful to Mr. Sleigh.

"Good morning, Mr. Geoffrey, good morning! This is terrible news I hear about you. Drunk at two o'clock in the morning. I'm astonished."

"I beg to recommend to your notice a bill, with the following information:—'£500 reward, for he who can prove that he minds his own business, and leaves other people's alone.' I'm afraid, sir, you would be an unsuccessful candidate."

"You are wrong; my business is to look after my flock, and I feel it my duty to remonstrate with you, Mr. Geoffrey."

"Well, say what you have to say, and ease your conscience."

"I only wish to say that if you don't guard against a repetition of this fault, you may be open to have quoted against you that passage of Scripture, which says, 'No drunkard shall inherit the kingdom of heaven.'"

"What would you recommend me to do?" insinuated Geoffrey.

"Do? Why, when you have had a glass or two, let no earthly consideration induce you to go beyond that quantity."

"That is your plan, I suppose?"

"It is." The curate was getting fidgetty under this rigid catechism.

"Then it would be difficult for you to keep sober, if you were not very particular about stopping at a certain quantity?"

"It might certainly be so, in course of time."

"Which shows that you, with your religion to support you, find it would be difficult to retain your moderate views, and yet you come to blame a young man like myself for once overstepping the bounds. Now, don't you really think, my good sir, that I'd better sign the pledge?" sneered Geoffrey.

"Not at all. But still I leave you to do as you please. Having expressed my sense of your being in

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Geoffrey's hand was uplifted, as if he would have crushed the helpless imbecile.

"Don't! Bob hasn't hurt you, why should you hurt poor Bob?"

"Then don't provoke me further! I may, some day, give you marks that will disfigure you for a long time to come."

"You know better! Bob isn't such a fool as you think. Bob saw all your goings on, last night, and Bob knows that you'd give something handsome if anybody would only lend you £100." He grinned, as if he knew the fearful import of the words he had been uttering, while Geoffrey very visibly changed countenance. Recovering himself, however, he said:—

"You know more than you should. Have you told anybody of this?"

"No, Bob hasn't. Stay, he told that man at the factory, with a black face. Mr. Hargreaves offered Bob a gold piece to tell him, and as Bob wanted the money to buy bread and meat, he told him. Oh! it was worth a gold piece, wasn't it?"

"Here is another, only promise me to mention it to nobody else."

"Bob will promise. And though Bob's a fool, he can keep a secret."

Geoffrey passed on, but his face grew still blacker, as he said "Sam Hargreaves, indeed! He is a dangerous man; he knows too much about me!"

Geoffrey soon afterwards reached the counting-house. But it would be folly to say that he was of any real use. The dissipation of the night before, now caused him to look upon everything with entirely different feelings. Labour, however light, seemed to be distasteful to him. His head was feverish, whilst his mind was not less excited. The latter, indeed, may be said to have been on the rack; for as yet, no means of escape from his difficulties had presented itself, and the more he tried to arrive at a conclusion the more confused his thoughts became, and he seemed hemmed in on all sides by the consequences of his own folly. Undoubtedly, the best thing for him to have done would be to have laid all the facts before his father, and trusted to his clemency; but the proud and sensitive mind of Geoffrey shrank from the confession of what he had done; so that idea was scouted as soon as imagined. The hours of the day crept onward, very

wearily as it seemed to Geoffrey, for he could give his attention to nothing. As usual, he was the last in the building. His father left without a word; Alfred followed, merely expressing a hope that, at any rate, *to-night* he hoped Geoffrey would return to tea.

All had left, and again he was alone. What was he to do? Scheme after scheme rapidly presented itself. But there were flaws in all, a want of completeness, Geoffrey doggedly thrust his hands in his pockets, tilted the stool, and leaned back against the wooden partition that separated the offices from the rest of the building. He appeared to be buried in deep thought. Suddenly his face seemed animated with a fiendish expression, and he muttered to himself, "No, no, I have not come to that: surely there is some other outlet." And yet after all, judging from his expression, the same thought constantly recurred to his mind.

Geoffrey Wallis thought he was alone. But, elevated on some great thick wooden machinery boxes, the glistening eyes of Sam Hargreaves glanced over the partition, exultingly noting the indications of perplexity so distinctly traceable on his young master's face. Hargreaves had not given Bob Rollinson a gold piece for nothing.

Sam Hargreaves thought *he* was alone in the watch he was keeping. He did not see the filmy eyes of the imbecile looking through an outer window that commanded a view of the counting-house.

Geoffrey seemed rousing himself. There was an unnatural whiteness about his face. His lips were rigidly closed, and his hands trembled. Lifting up the lid of his desk, he took out a piece of blank paper. Turning round, he next possessed himself of the copying book; after tossing over its leaves for some time, he stopped at a page signed by his father—James Wallis. It was a plain and a bold signature, still, somewhat peculiar. Geoffrey next took up a pen, and copied the signature over and over again.

The eyes of Sam Hargreaves seemed alive with expectation and curiosity.

It was not likely that Geoffrey would be able to produce a good copy of his father's autograph, for we have already said that his hands trembled, and well they might, for the practiser was trying to produce a finished forgery!

He tried many times, and as often failed; but his

strength of purpose seemed to be deserting him. The pen dropped from his hand, and now even his physical strength appeared to be leaving him, and he fell to the floor exhausted; for the time being, respiration was suspended—he had fainted.

Sam Hargreaves was instantly by the side of his young master, trying to bring him round by such rough methods as suggested themselves to his mind.

"He is but a weak young fool, after all," muttered the porter, "he has the courage to begin, but not to finish. Bah! He's a scared coward."

Geoffrey opened his eyes, and the first thing Hargreaves did, was to apply a flask of brandy to the young man's lips, of which he drank deeply.

"Now then, sir, rouse yourself, come!"

"That paper!—I—give it to me—don't look—it—I was only—only—amusing myself—give it me—give it me!"

Hargreaves laughed; such a nasty, disagreeable, ominous chuckle!

"Not bad, Master Geoffrey, for a first attempt at forgery. You promise well."

"Forgery! Would you dare to insinuate that I—"

"Now don't you waste your breath, sir. You *meant* to commit a forgery. I know you want money, and what you want it for. Don't try to hoodwink Sam Hargreaves, 'cos it won't do."

He spoke very differently to the style in which a porter should address a master. Hargreaves evidently thought "knowledge was power," and he had got the power.

"I see you know more than I would have you know, Hargreaves. But it is not a very noble way to purchase the information from an idiot for a sovereign!"

"Never mind about the way. Let us discuss matters quietly. I always have tried to help you, and I am not less willing than I've always been."

"Well, if you have some means to propose, let me hear them?" Geoffrey's eagerness got the better of his repugnance to receive advice from his father's porter, and he prepared to listen. He felt, indeed, that Hargreaves had power over him.

"A clumsy way of getting the money, is forgery, very; it's liable to be found out. Clerks at the bank can tell the 'littlest' difference between the real and the spurious."

"Let us drop that subject. I thought you had something to propose."

"Forgeries are very inconvenient," resumed Hargreaves, "that's about the last method of getting money that *I* should try. The practice is a sort of self-detector."

"Will you cease talking of that, and proceed with what you have to say?" It was plain that Geoffrey would like to get into a passion with the porter, but dare not.

"Your father has a safe in his private office, ain't he?"

Geoffrey started, and again the blood rushed from his face, leaving it pale and motionless as that of a marble statue.

"He has, certainly."

"He keeps money in it, and as I believe uncounted, because it is under his own eye, and the key is kept in his own pocket."

"You are right again!" Geoffrey was surprised at the porter's knowledge, and with as much calmness as he could command, waited to hear the sequel.

"You can take what you want from the safe, without much fear of discovery."

"You are a villain, Hargreaves, and I will denounce you as such!"

"And you'll then commit the *forgery* on the sly, I suppose, eh?"

Geoffrey winced. What was the difference? One was a direct theft; the other was quite as much so, only there was an intermediate stage, with every probability that the attempt at forgery would fix the guilt upon the right party, the more especially as Geoffrey only had charge of his father's bank cheque-books.

"Why, even if your plan were assented to, do you think that I am a housebreaker, or that I carry tools about with me for the purpose of prizing open iron safes?"

"No! I can do away with the necessity for all such botheration. Here is an implement which you will find fits the safe to a hair's-breadth."

As Hargreaves said this, he laid upon the desk a bright new key, fashioned very like the one with which Geoffrey was familiar as that which opened the safe. The eyes of the young man distended, and at a single glance he comprehended everything.

"It is your only chance of escape," urged Hargreaves.

" You must either do this, or exposure and disgrace will certainly follow. You know that."

" I—I accept the means of deliverance you offer me." Deliverance! What a mockery. It is thraldom, life-long thraldom. You have determined to bind around you chains that will be eternally dragging you down.

" Proceed! I will follow," said Geoffrey.

Hargreaves moved towards the private room of Mr. Wallis. This he soon opened, and the tempter and the tempted stood together by the side of the safe.

The key, which had been manufactured through the instrumentality of Mrs. Hargreaves, was now applied to the lock, and the door flew open.

" Now then, Mr. Geoffrey, the way is clear. Help yourself."

He might have been talking to a stone statue, for Geoffrey stood motionless.

" Rouse yourself! Would you have disgrace and discovery follow your hesitation?"

" I would rather you would draw out the cash-box," said Geoffrey.

" No, thank you!" Hargreaves smiled, as much as to say, " You are very sharp, but I am not to be caught in *that* trap."

Geoffrey knelt down, and his hand was upon the handle of the japanned box, when a slight noise was heard, and he trembled violently.

" It was nothing," said Hargreaves.

You were wrong, astute Sam; it was Bob Rollinson, who had come round to another window, and in climbing up for a view, had missed his footing.

Geoffrey drew forth the box, and its contents were soon displayed. There were above £2,000 in notes and gold. Hargreaves' eyes glistened; Geoffrey's face was yet pale as death, but his lips expressed resolution in their rigidity.

" You cannot have troubled yourself about my affairs without an object?"

" Well, as the cash is there, I don't mind having an odd fifty," said the porter.

Geoffrey first gave Hargreaves what he claimed, and then took for himself the £100, about which he had troubled himself the whole day.

Geoffrey Wallis had thus placed his foot upon the first downward step of the ladder, and we all know that

to retreat is far more difficult than to advance in evil.

At first, he tried to find out plausible excuses for what he had done. It would never be discovered, he thought, and so far as his own conscience went, he smoothed the matter over by thinking that the abstraction (he dared not acknowledge to himself that it was a theft) was shorn of some of its wickedness by the fact that the abstractor stood in close relationship to the loser. In our opinion, it only increased the heinousness of the offence, for where most confidence is reposed, there should also be the greatest faithfulness. But he was plainly uneasy. Every now and then, as he walked homewards, his face would flush, and his heart beat wildly, for conscience was busy admonishing him. Had he done the deed without the knowledge of anyone else, he might not have been so uneasy, for it was the fear of discovery, and not the shame of the act, which caused him to tremble. Hargreaves, it is true, had participated in the robbery, and his mouth was therefore closed. Still, that others knew of his guilt was unsatisfactory, and productive of discomfort, to Geoffrey.

As he neared home, he found the idiot in his old position, swinging idly on the gate.

"Good night to you, Master Wallis. Bob wonders why you don't walk with your old friend, Mister Hargreaves. You've left him behind, ain't you?"

"I want no more of his society than I'm forced to endure, fool."

"Bob ain't a fool! Bob'll shew you that, some day. I've got eyes, and Bob can use 'em. Bob has a tongue and he can speak, and ears too. Ha! ha!"

"This fool is more insane than I thought him," muttered Geoffrey, "and yet if——"

He did not stay to finish his sentence, for Sam Hargreaves was fast gaining upon him, and he had had enough of the porter's company for one evening.

He hurried homeward, but as he neared Rose Cottage, his heart smote him. He had left the house *comparatively innocent*, but now, with all the palliations he had endeavoured to make to himself for the act, he could not deny that he returned to the cottage as a thief.

But let us not do him the injustice to suppose that he bore the feeling of guilt without suffering keenly. Every word uttered by his sweet little sister, when the

family prayers were read out, was a reproach. He felt himself a criminal, without the desire to retrace his steps by an open and manly confession of all that had befallen him; and when Jenny playfully took his face between her hands and kissed him, ere retiring, he felt that after what he had done, he was undeserving of the love his little sister lavished upon him.

Is it likely sleep visited him that night? No. Racked and tormented, he tossed feverishly on the bed, busy with his own thoughts; big black shadows that frightened him from their very hideousness; he rose haggard and pale, and unwillingly returned to the scene that had already caused him so much uneasiness and pain.

Let the perpetrator of guilt pause before he commits the act. He cannot lift the veil from the future which lies before him. He cannot see how many heart-pangs he must endure as the penalty. He cannot tell how much anguish will fill his heart nigh unto breaking. He cannot foresee the possibility of that heart becoming guilt-hardened, until sin ceases to be distasteful, and conscience slumbers dangerously.

Geoffrey Wallis went through his labours that day, but it was in an automatic fashion. A double current of thought constantly ran through his mind, and while endeavouring to fix his mind upon business matters, blacker thoughts would inevitably thrust themselves before him, and ere night arrived, he was sick at heart, and bent his steps towards Longford. His design now was to drown recollection in the wine-cup, that is, to make bad worse, and to take by the hand the foul friend who had led him into the guilt from which he now suffered.

To Longford he went several nights in succession, never getting thoroughly drunk, for he knew what the consequences of his so doing would be at home. It was sufficient that for the time being, in the society of "jolly good fellows," and with the wine-cup at his side, he could forget that which he did not care to remember, beguiling himself into a belief that there was nothing now to be feared. But these orgies could not be carried on without money, and as Geoffrey had paid back the £100 on the Saturday night, he had not much cash to spare. One week after the first abstraction, coming home with his brains fired, losing all recollection of what he had already suffered in mind, he

re-opened the warehouse-door, and taking out the key which Sam Hargeeaves had taken care to leave in the possession of his young master, he opened the safe once more, and took from thence a further sum of money. Stupified by the fumes of drink, this time he felt no compunctions of conscience, and walked home doggedly, with a full knowledge of what he had done, and a stubborn determination to take all the consequences.

It was risking a great deal, but he did not know that. Could he then have looked into his future life, he would have staggered before the dreadful prospect.

These continued absences from home did not pass unnoticed by Alfred. But he had been rebuffed so often, that he did not choose to risk giving any more advice until a more favourable opportunity occurred. An elder brother makes the younger feel that, as he came into the world a few months earlier, it is scarcely likely that he will condescend to accept advice from his junior; and in the case of Geoffrey, this was further heightened by the unwelcome fact that he knew he was in the wrong, and that, though younger, Alfred had a perfect right to admonish him.

It was quite plain that instead of retracing his footsteps, Geoffrey was advancing. He had plunged deeply into guilt, and thought that retreat was impossible. For weeks together he was never at home to tea. He was a more constant guest at "The Green Man," where he spent money freely, sometimes played (and often lost) at billiards. His laugh was now the loudest, but it was not a natural one; it was hollow and husky, while his eyes blazed with an unnatural lustre as he quaffed the beverage by his side.

Twice he had returned home the "worse" for liquor, and twice this transgression had been quietly concealed by his mother, who had implored of him to come home and spend his evenings quietly with them. Quietly? There is no quiet for an uneasy conscience. It would have been a punishment for Geoffrey to spend his nights in the society of those whom he felt he had injured, almost beyond hope of forgiveness.

CHAPTER V.

"Sweet innocence, the garb of youth;
Of matchless grace, and purest truth;
Clothed in this robe of brightest hue,
A heart beneath beats warm and true."

"Where nature revelled in her brightest tint;
Where beauties grand were lavished without stint;
Where wing'd creation sung their sweetest lay—
Where golden sunset shot its last bright ray."

ABOUT a mile and a half from Rose Cottage, in a direction not far removed from the route to Longford, an admirer of nature would suddenly come upon as fair and romantic a sight as the most ardent lover of scenery could wish to behold.

Turning out of the highway which led to Longford, the visitor would have to traverse the depths of a forest about half a mile across. The wood was so dense that, even on the brightest day, the sun could only just be seen glittering and twinkling through the thick masses of green foliage overhead; while on a day less bright, the wood appeared gloomy and dark, not at all in keeping with, and certainly not enhancing, the richness and luxuriance of the wild vegetation around and above. On a bright day, little patches of sunshine gleamed through small openings in the wilderness of leaves above, and cast their shifting brightness upon tufts of wild flowers clothed in their gorgeous robes of many colours. It was then a fairy-like spot, but still, not far from thence, there was one more beautiful and romantic.

As you progressed through the wood, the ground gradually rose; and if you turned round, you would gaze upon a decline thickly planted with trees, evidently of long growth; old gnarled oaks, strong and stubborn, some hollow—the habitation of owls and other birds. But as you progress upwards, you come upon the verge of the forest, and your eye lights upon a real scene of beauty. At your feet, still on rising ground, is a garden full of flower-beds, yielding a most luxuriant perfume. It is a beautiful plot, with walks curiously winding about in most picturesque fashion, with a little arbour cunningly placed in the best situation; the whole being bounded on all sides but one by a wall of thick forest foliage. On the side which was the exception, rose a small and unpretending cottage. We say unpretending, because there were no appearances of architectural grandeur; but if beauty may

be called pretentious, the cottage had a right to the title. A building of two stories, completely clothed with dark green ivy, glimmering in the bright sunlight, trailing up the cottage-side, peeping in at the latticed windows, turning round about the rustic porch, hiding the roof, and even looking down the chimney ! It was a beautiful little cottage, and from its porch commanded a view of far-off hill and dale. From thence could be seen Mr. Wallis' works, his residence, and the little village of S—— ; while not much further away, but in an opposite direction, the tall chimneys and the still taller church-spire of Longford, rose up sharply against the clear blue sky.

It was a fairy-like spot, and we are bound to say that the queen of the fairies could be found inside that little cottage. Mossgrove (for that was the name of this spot), though very beautiful, was surpassed by Jessie Ryle, who lived here with her mother—a lady now advanced in age, and looking forward to deliverance from this " vale of tears." Life had had its lights and shadows with her, as with others. They had alternately shone upon, or darkened her existence ; and now she had nothing to live for, save her daughter Jessie.

That daughter was one of whom a mother might well be proud. She was upright in heart, and straightforward in everything ; so much so, that when she occasionally paid a visit to buy the necessaries at Longford, she might easily be imposed upon, so simple and artless were her ideas of everything. Her beauty was the admiration of those who had seen her ; but of all around, she was the least conscious of her perfections in this respect. This fact only added a new grace to those she already possessed, for beauty combined with modesty is doubly attractive. In form she was rather slight, but her figure in all respects was perfect. The shoulders fell off gracefully from a neck and head singularly like those of the Spanish ladies—the former being long, swan-like, and graceful, while the latter was small, adorned with long rich chestnut tresses ; two brilliant eyes, a high and intellectual forehead, a nose slightly *retroussé*, and a mouth small, but very neatly formed. Her motions, too, were quiet and dignified, abounding in that ease and grace which all can admire, but none can accurately define.

Mrs. Ryle was originally resident in Scotland, but

she was seen by a poor English clergyman, admired, courted, and finally married by him. The only fruit of that union was their daughter Jessie. Mr. Ryle had been vicar of S—— some twenty years before our story opens, and died before Jessie was born, leaving the mother almost without provision of any kind, and with an infant daughter to provide for. But she was not a woman to sit calmly down, and fold her hands in the midst of difficulties. "Providence helps those who help themselves;" and being a woman of education, she commenced a village school, and by seeking pupils, and really forwarding them in education (while she managed to make them love her as a mother), she contrived to gain a respectable position for herself and child. For years she had laboured on, but as she amassed a little money, and the fatigues of advancing age told too plainly upon a frame already worn out by a grief which never left her, she determined to take Mossgrove, and as Jessie was now old enough to do a little towards their sustenance, the money Mrs. Ryle had got together (or rather the interest she received from it) was eking out by what Jessie contrived to make by needlework done at home.

The only other inmate of the cottage was the old gardener, so called by courtesy, because he had held that post under the late Mr. Ryle. The gardener, whose name was Joseph Wyndham, certainly kept the garden in order, and it was to his skill and taste that the garden owed its beautiful appearance. But amongst his other duties, he occasionally performed such household work as would appear highly derogatory to the dignity of many in his position; such as peeling potatoes, cleaning knives and forks, fetching water from the spring close by, selling the vegetables he himself had grown for his mistress, and many other little offices. He had no salary, and wanted none, merely desiring to live and die in the service of his old mistress and her daughter, whose persons he would have defended, at any time, with his life; though, to be sure, he was not over vigorous and strong, having passed his sixtieth year.

On the particular afternoon upon which we introduce Mossgrove and its inmates to the reader, the sun was shining brightly upon the scene, gilding everything with its all-beautifying presence. Joseph, spade in hand, was quietly digging in the garden, the only

interruption to the sound of the grating implement, as it passed through the earth, being the chorus of feathered songsters, which rose melodiously all around, occasionally bursting out louder than ever. A merry concert, nature's music, rising with its shrill vibrations into the calm air of the summer's afternoon. We love these timid choristers, who will sing for you and gladden you, independent of circumstance. For what know they of shadow? Their's is a life of sunshine, bright and gleesome, free as the winds, and they echo their joyousness in our ears at all times. They never entirely desert us, winter and summer they cheer us and furnish us with ever-varying songs.

The door of the cottage was open, Widow Ryle was reposing in a large arm-chair, whilst Jessie was busily engaged with some kind of needlework. The latter occasionally stopped and looked out as if she would pierce the depths of the wood. Perhaps she was expecting someone; perhaps she stopped to admire the prospect beyond the forest. But the former was the most likely supposition, for her cheek flushed now and then, and her eyes beamed with even more than ordinary softness.

The figure she expected, and the voice she loved, was that of Geoffrey Wallis!

It will be useless to tell the reader, after this, that Jessie Ryle and Geoffrey Wallis were what is termed "engaged." Not with the consent of Mr. and Mrs. Wallis, but by a dogged determination to have his own way on the part of Geoffrey. His father and mother (as fathers and mothers will occasionally think) were of opinion that their son might have done better; but whatever other faults that son might have, he at any rate could not be called mercenary so far as his engagement with Jessie was concerned. Except the prospect of succession to the small yearly interest her mother was receiving, Jessie had no other monetary prospects. Geoffrey did really love Jessie Ryle, and had managed to gain her affections. Unaccustomed to the ways of the world, she trusted and relied upon him implicitly, and so far as she had gone, had never had occasion to regret her confidence in him.

The afternoon wore slowly on, Jessie's fingers were busily employed, and Mrs. Ryle awoke from her nap. On this particular afternoon, Geoffrey had promised his betrothed to come early and spend a long evening

with her. Those evenings were pleasant ones to this Jessie, when she listened eagerly to the tender words of her future husband, and as may naturally be expected, she was now eagerly watching for his arrival.

But five, six, seven, eight o'clock passed on, and she became uneasy.

"Joseph! Have you seen or heard anything of Mr. Wallis yet?"

"No, miss; you would have seen him sooner than me, too, if he'd been anywhere about. You know you've sharper eyes than me when Mr. Wallis is to come."

Jessie smiled and blushed, though she was not unwilling for others to know that she loved Geoffrey Wallis as much as he professed to love her.

"Mother! Do you think anything can have happened to keep him away?"

"I cannot tell, my child. Perhaps he has had to stay longer at the works, or there may be many reasons at which you and I cannot guess."

"But I heard the factory bell ring three hours ago."

"Don't distress yourself, Jessie, love; he will be here soon, without doubt."

The sun began to near the western horizon, and the bright, silvery shimmer upon the ivy-leaves was fast changing to deep gold. The window-panes seemed on fire, with the reflection of sunset. A splendid scene it was, too. The vale was a beautiful sight at any time; but now, when lit up by the ever-changing hues of sunset, and the intense blue of the sky, relieved by colours gradually deepening to a bright red, it was indeed magnificent.

As Jessie strained her eyes up and down the vale, she saw a figure coming along the high-road from Longford. She knew it at once, and her heart grew much lighter in consequence. Putting away her needlework, she busied herself about some arrangements in the house, spread a light and frugal repast, and by the time these preliminary duties had been gone through, Geoffrey was just emerging from the depths of the forest.

"He's coming now, miss; he's coming," shouted old Joseph.

"Ah! I've seen him some time since," laughed Jessie.

"Didn't I tell you your eyes would find him out before mine?" said the old man.

"Oh, yes! Good evening, Geoffrey. Are you not rather late to-night?"

Geoffrey winced under this slight reproach, because he knew he deserved it, and was also aware that the reason for delay was an unworthy one.

"Why, love, I have been delayed by a little business at Longford." His voice was husky, and his eyes seemed to Jessie much duller than usual.

"Very well, Geoffrey. Of course I cannot always expect you to come and see me punctually to the minute, as you have generally done."

Geoffrey made no answer, but strolled about the garden, occasionally plucking a flower, rather fiercely as Jessie thought. She wondered what was the matter.

"Why, Geoffrey! I declare you have not kissed mother, as usual. What can be the matter with you? Surely nothing has gone wrong?"

You little know how much, poor innocent girl! What charms hath the splendid scenery for Geoffrey Wallis? He felt that whilst all around him was pure, even as the heart of that girl whom he had promised to call wife, he was polluted. While all he gazed upon was innocent, he was guilty. Geoffrey was not himself to-night. His brain was aching, for the past events oppressed it, and he had made matters no better by staying at "The Green Man" for two hours. Everything was beginning to be sacrificed for the temptation to drink. Even beautiful Jessie Ryle had been secondary this evening.

Geoffrey immediately went up to Mrs. Ryle, made an apology of some kind, and kissed her. Immediately he did so, the good lady started back as if she had been stung.

"Why, what's the matter? I havn't hurt you, I hope," said Geoffrey.

"You have been drinking! Geoffrey, it is a bad sign for a young man. I have heard something of this before, but have been unwilling to believe it. Like a mother, I do not wish to see the faults of one whom I may call son, until they force themselves upon me."

"Am I to go nowhere without receiving teetotal lectures?" Geoffrey was disposed to have a quarrel.

"I have seen so much of what is produced by drink, that I cannot help warning you. You may live through life without incurring any danger by it, but when a young man likes it so much as I have heard (pardon

me) that you do, he runs a great risk, with no advantage on the other side."

"I am not such a fool as to—" Geoffrey checked himself, for he was aware that he had done much to deserve the epithet; altogether, judging from the past, it was best to say nothing.

"I'm sure you would not wish to give pain to Jessie, in the future," said Mrs. Ryle.

"I would rather lose my life than injure her in any way."

"Thank you, Geoffrey," whispered Jessie, "I will remember that."

"Then if there is any danger in drink, I'm sure you'll give it up for her sake?"

"When the danger comes, I will keep it off some way or another."

"Now let us change the conversation. How is your friend, Andrew Dean?"

"Andrew has turned teetotal, and has got a situation, I hear."

"I am glad of it," said Jessie, "he will now be a better and a wiser man."

"Why, of course, when a chap like him, who has been unsteady, suddenly turns sober, there is no doubt that he stands a chance of getting on. Now, there's Angus James, about as great a drinker as I know, they say he has gone up to London, but he is keeping a tavern in Gracechurch Street; I shouldn't like that job."

"And why not?" asked Mrs. Ryle, smiling as she asked the question.

"Why, it brings you in contact with a great deal of the tag-rag and bobtail class."

"And yet, Geoffrey, you take your custom to the same shop?"

"There, we are on to the old topic again, and I thought we were to change it."

The conversation was now principally carried on by Jessie and Geoffrey; and after supper, the two lovers strolled about the garden, and finally seated themselves in the arbour.

"And when will you come and see me again?" asked Jessie, timidly.

"As soon as I can, love; sometimes I have to go to Longford, and it detains me."

"I know you won't be offended, Geoffrey; but is it

true that you mix with the young men who have a sort of club at 'The Green Man?'"

"Yes, it is. But pray don't bother me about that subject. Everybody seems to delight in teasing me, because I take a glass. Pray don't *you* be one of the number."

"Why, Geoffrey! Do you not wish me to talk about what concerns you?"

"Oh, yes! But there's no use in ringing the changes upon the subject you've started."

"Well, then, I'll only ask you one question; may I?"

"Yes!"

"Can it ever be possible that you will care for your glass more than you care for me?"

"Certainly not! I can answer that question with a clear conscience, at any rate."

Perhaps! Already, your glass has brought upon you more than you suspected it ever could; and as you have had occasion to doubt yourself, surely you need not be too certain now.

It was ten o'clock, and the moon shone bright and clear in the heavens. Geoffrey, therefore, took leave of Jessie and her mother, the former watching him with loving eyes, until he was hid by the profound depths of the forest. As she entered their little home again, her mother's face seemed clouded: it did not wear its usually cheerful aspect.

"Mother, dear! something distresses you, I know. Pray what is it?"

"I don't like to find a confirmation of what I have heard respecting Geoffrey."

"Don't fear about that, mother; I'm sure he will give it up if it is necessary."

"It is necessary *now*; that is very evident."

"I think he will do anything I request him to do, mother."

"Then if you can, break him of the habit *at once*."

"I have not the power and influence of a wife, as yet."

"If you wait to try the experiment till then, I'm afraid you may find the undertaking more difficult of performance than you think."

"But surely you are not doubtful of his keeping steady, mother?"

"I must say I am; and hark you, Jessie, I would never marry any man who could not command himself. He will fail to secure your respect!"

As Jessie closed the doors and went to rest that night, for the first time she felt unhappy about her engagement, though she would not have cancelled it for the world.

* * * *

Geoffrey rapidly passed onwards through the forest. It was very dark, scarcely discernable was the footpath, except to one well accustomed to it. The crisp leaves crackling under his feet was the only noise which met his ear, save now and then faint sounds from those of the animal creation that had not yet accompanied nature to sleep. Very busily engaged was Geoffrey with his thoughts, and those thoughts being none of the pleasantest, we may naturally suppose that his temper would probably be in accord therewith.

He emerged from the gloominess of the forest into the comparative brightness which illumined the country beyond. Opening the wicket which led to the road, he was soon journeying on towards home, which he was now rapidly nearing. At an angle of the road, he came upon the gaunt figure of Sam Hargreaves, who was leaning against a wall, with his arms folded, very quietly smoking a pipe. It was a strange place, a strange hour, and a strange meeting!

"Good evening! Master Geoffrey. A very pleasant summer's night, ain't it?"

"Very! You are taking your ease, I suppose. Good night!" Geoffrey was passing on.

"Hi! Master Geoffrey. Wait a minute, I've summut to say to you."

"Look sharp then, for it is late, and they are expecting me at home."

"Look sharp, eh? Well, that's good. I reckon I aint a goin' to break my wind about the matter. Look here, I want twenty pounds down."

"Twenty pounds down! What for, pray?" Geoffrey was just beginning to get a glimpse of Hargreaves' power. The latter, too, was a little "the worse" for liquor.

"What for? Well, I like that. Who furnished you with that nice key, eh?"

"I thought you had been already sufficiently paid for that business."

"Paid? Not I; I mean to make as much out of my knowledge as I can."

" You needn't shout so loud that everybody can hear you."

" I ain't ; besides, there's nobody near to hear us. I've heard say that a guilty chap always thinks somebody's near. Perhaps *you* feel like that, eh ? "

" Beware what you say, Sam Hargreaves. I can have you discharged from your master's service. How would your plans work then, I wonder ? "

" Better still. I would expose you beautifully, and Sam Hargreaves would only lose a situation, whilst Geoffrey Wallis would lose character, position, everything."

" And what if I risk everything for the purpose of shaking off such a viper as yourself ? " Geoffrey felt his blood boiling, and his utterance was thick and husky.

" You daren't. You know you're too great a coward! Would you like father, mother, sister, and brother to call you THIEF; would you like that smooth-faced chit, over at Mossgrove, to visit you in a felon's cell ? Not you. You daren't split ! "

Geoffrey stood rooted to the spot. He knew well enough the truth of what Hargreaves advanced. He *felt* that it was undeniable. The moon shone down upon his face, heightening his paleness, and various emotions were discernible in the workings of his countenance.

" I will give you what you ask. But don't think my weakness will last for ever. You may some day find that you have driven me rather too far."

" Of course ! Just so ? Five, ten, fifteen, twenty. Good-night, sir. A pleasant walk to you. Sweet slumbers wait upon you. Ha ! ha ! "

Geoffrey rushed away with the consciousness of being in the power of a fiend who not only tempted him to the guilt, but aided him, then extorted money from him for doing it, and finally, when his demands were satisfied, laughed at him ! As he walked away rapidly, Sam Hargreaves took his pipe from his mouth, and began to mutter.

" Didn't I say to the missus that it would be a good thing for us. How could she know the nice little fortune that wax-impression was to bring us. Ha ! ha ! "

Having succeeded in his demands, Hargreaves now lagged behind Geoffrey, who was fast nearing home. The latter was so abstracted, that he was unconscious

of an unusual light in the sky, until it became so evident, and the smell of burning was so strong, that he could not help thinking there must be a fire somewhere near, perhaps in S——; at the same moment, Hargreaves came up.

"That's a fire, isn't it Hargreaves?" said Geoffrey.

"Seems about as like one as ever I seen ought."

"Where can it be? We must help them, at any rate," and Geoffrey at once quickened his footsteps into something like a run.

"It's at Taylor's. You can help if you like, but I shan't. He gave evidence that he thought I was as drunk as the rest, when he hit that brat of his. So they may help 'em that likes, but it won't be Sam Hargreaves."

"Inhuman brute," thought Geoffrey, as he hurried onwards.

"Bob Rollinson's in that house, and the poor ass may be of some further use yet; I'll go and see, at any rate, and if there's a chance of saving the fool, why, I'll do it. As to anybody else, I owe the family grudges enough, and I'll pay 'em off now."

The flames rose high into the air, whilst long black columns of thick smoke curled round and round, licking the fire as it shot upward. The crackling of timber, and the hum of many voices, became discernible as Geoffrey neared the scene. It lit up the country round with an unnatural hue—it even paled the light of the moon, peering through the masses of smoke which were rolling upwards.

CHAPTER VI.

"An imbecile! whose life was void.
The shape of man, with reason none!
But worse by far that wretch who drinks
Until, before him, nature shrinks!
Who, with a madman's hand, despoils
His home—the product of his toils."

We must ask the patience of our reader, whilst we sketch the history and parentage of poor Bob Rollinson. Indeed, we scarcely need apologise, for he plays a prominent part in our tale, and his own history would furnish a good moral to illustrate the points at which we aim; viz:—the evil and pernicious influence of the drinking customs of modern society.

Not many months previous to the opening of our

story, a stranger happened to call at the head inn of S——. Bob Rollinson performed a small service for the gentleman, who, with a desire to pay Bob in some way, offered him a glass of beer, which, to the stranger's astonishment, was refused with an expression as near that of contempt as the poor imbecile was capable of assuming. Had that stranger known the short history of the lad (for he was still so called, although certainly over thirty years of age), he would have ceased to wonder at Bob's refusal of a glass of beer.

Robert Rollinson was the only son of a man once much respected, and very well known in the neighbourhood of S——. Squire Rollinson could boast of a pretty extensive rent-roll, and being of what is termed a "jolly" disposition, enacted the country squire with more than the usual truthfulness. Those who wished to remember him, and his acts, had not to tax their memories for a longer period back than fifteen years, at the time we commence our story. Squire Rollinson was a little, corpulent man, possessing a jovial face, a generous heart, and a liberal hand. He sought the hand of a neighbouring damsel of fair fame, gaining that, and her heart also.

The Squire's daily programme, when his fame for hospitality was at its height, ran somewhat as follows. He rose at about nine a.m., took breakfast, and as soon after that as possible his "morning dram." Then amused himself in sports of various kind until dinner-hour, at which time he was often joined by half-a-dozen fox-hunting companions, who ate his dinners, drunk his wines, and swore everlasting fidelity to the Squire's interests. Of course, according to the usages of modern society, the lady or ladies were required to leave the room as soon as the wine-bottle made its appearance. [A hard custom that—one that shows how much the "Lords of the Creation" are afraid lest the weaker sex should discover how little able to command, they make themselves sometimes.] If the contents of the decanter had not totally 'incapacitated' some of them, they would then sally out to inspect various matters pertaining to agriculture, &c.; the Squire himself returning after a while to his lady, inwardly voting *her* insipid, after the jollification he had held with his companions. Spending a morose

evening with Mrs. Rollinson, he would then don his "nightcap," (a last potation) and tumble into bed.

But extensive as was the Squire's rent-roll, his extravagances shot ahead of it. To keep up the style he had begun, it was soon discovered that ready-money was required. There was no other way of getting this than by mortgaging part of his estate. It is no part of our story to dwell upon the many causes which forced him to do this. Suffice it for our purpose that the money was raised by his solicitor, and the Squire once more breathed freely. But the lull was only temporary. Instead of decreasing, his hospitality (which was now an injustice to himself, his wife, and child), only increased, keeping pace in this respect with his love of the bottle. The Squire was of an excitable temperament, (a dangerous man to tamper with drink); and each "bout" seemed only to act as a fresh stimulant for the perpetration of another such piece of folly.

Here then, say our cynical friends, was the man that should have signed the pledge. If this be the case, how many thousands are there not who need to follow his example? Look around you! Can you not name *one* man to whom drinking is *dangerous*. If it is so to him, though you drink never so little, you run in the same traces with him.

We could wish the reader to take a glance at the Squire's table, after the ladies have been banished. We do *not* wish, however, that he should submit to read the records of *some* things which are said after-dinner, which might, possibly, still further enlighten him as to the reason why ladies are dispensed with. Our story, it may be presumed, may be read by those wives and daughters; and though it is fit they should know the enormity of the evil at whose roots we strike, it is not desirable that their ears should tingle, and their faces crimson, at words unfit to be listened to by beings possessing reason and delicacy.

Still, the reader has no occasion to regret the absence of a long page of dry and insipid after-dinner talk, consisting for the most part of such empty remarks as he would scarcely thank us for inflicting upon his patience. When conversation needs intoxicating liquors to enliven it; when a man's wisdom so far fails him that he must needs look in the wine-cup for help in the matter; when subjects are so much

wanted that alcohol is invoked to loosen the tongue, we are apt to think the conversation not worth listening to, except it be to teach a lesson of usefulness regarding the impropriety of muddling the brain.

As may be naturally inferred, amongst his acquaintance, the Squire numbered a great many who professed much and never performed anything. But the good-hearted Squire was always inclined to believe everything, and more especially that which he wished to believe, and as matters grew worse, and bills poured in, the Squire delighted to think that after all was said and done, he had plenty of good friends to rely upon.

Conversing about money, one day, the Squire said:—

“ I never refused to help a man that wanted it, and never shall.”

“ Ah ! Squire, you are too good for this world. Nevertheless, had I the chance to do the same to you, I would show you that towards a noble fellow like yourself, I could also do a similar action.” This was said by Henry Gammon, Esq., who was under the firm belief that it was impossible anything beyond the utterance of the above would ever be required, and so was exceedingly liberal—in words.

“ Hear ! hear ! Open-housed hospitality, like yours, my good friend, will always command substantial returns whenever, or if ever, such should be required,” whined Lawyer Close, as he poured out a glass of champagne, and helped himself to a thick slice of pine-apple.

“ I hope and trust I should never be behind either of you, gentlemen, whatever might befall our friend,” said the Reverend Harvey Sleigh. “ But why all these assurances of friendship ? Our good host knows well enough how much we respect him.”

Yes ! and believed it, which was unfortunate for him !

It is not our business to dwell too much upon the history of a subordinate character in our drama. Suffice it therefore to say that the Squire increased his “ allowances ” of drink, both in public and private, and eventually had to make up his mind either to try the liberality of his friends, or to be incarcerated in jail. For it will not seem very strange that creditors should grow impatient, when they saw that the money, which ought to be used in liquidating their just claims, was recklessly wasted in riotous living. As to giving up his habits, the Squire had neither the courage nor

the inclination to face the change manfully, and so retrieve his fallen fortunes.

The interest upon loans became due with fearful rapidity; interest and compound interest soon augmented the original loan, and usurers, generally, are not a very patient tribe. So that affairs at last seemed to be reaching a crisis, and the Squire, after days of hesitation, (not that he doubted the result, but that he dreaded the degredation) determined to call upon the three friends who had been so liberal with their promises. That he would be successful, he was quite certain. So one morning, not without a very heavy heart, be it confessed, he donned his best broadcloth suit and white hat, determined to show his friends that he knew the goodness of their hearts and would trust to it.

For several weeks he had not been out at all, and, of late, his invitations had ceased; for he was ashamed of his poverty, and his supply of wines was now as small as his credit. But this did not damp his expectations.

He was ushered into the drawing-room of Henry Gammon, Esq., who presently made his appearance with a smile playing about his thin lips. He certainly did give the squire a shake of the hand, but he accompanied it with a queer, puzzled look.

After the common civilities had been exchanged, the Squire commenced speaking about the subject which had brought him there.

"I dare say you wonder what my visit is about, Mr. Gammon?"

"No! I am not curious at all. Perhaps you have a little business you may want transacting." Mr. Gammon possessed a small ivory auctioneer's hammer.

"Not exactly that—and yet it is business after all."

"Just so! Perhaps you want a little valuation job done?"

"No, not that; and yet the result of this visit will be according to the valuation you have always been pleased to set on me."

It was wonderful how the radiant smile on the auctioneer's face began to change into one of those sardonic grins, which mean—nobody can tell exactly what.

"Fact is, my dear Gammon, I am just now in a little difficulty. But why should I hesitate to one who has

professed so much to me as yourself. To come to the point, then, can you lend me £500 for a short time?"

The auctioneer bit his lip; he rose from his chair as if about to leave the room.

"I should have been, of course, very happy to do so, Mr. Rollinson, but the fact is—the fact is—"

"Don't hesitate, Gammon; you think it would be insulting me, or hurting my feelings, perhaps, to offer it. But don't be afraid, I'm not at all too sensitive, just now."

"I wish he were," growled Gammon. "Fact is, my money is all locked up, just now."

"Locked up? Do you mean that you won't lend it to me, Mr. Gammon?"

"Should be very happy, only circumstances over which—"

"Stop the lie that is trembling on your lips. If you must refuse me the loan, do so in a manly way. Don't fish after rotten, thread-bare excuses."

"Really, sir, this is most unjust. A man has a right to do as he pleases with his money."

"Yes! But not to make promises as fragile as bubbles, and quite as empty. I can now appreciate one of my friends. Good morning, sir."

The Squire was not to be easily daunted, so he repaired to the residence of Lawyer Close, nothing doubting but that he would make up for the auctioneer's refusal. The man of law did not seem over and above glad to meet his reduced client. However, as he knew civility was cheap enough, he produced plenty of *that* article.

Good morning, Lawyer. Is it possible, do you think, to raise any more cash upon that mortgage of my estate? I want it badly enough."

"More money?" Mr. Close smiled, as if he thought it were a capital joke. "Not exactly, Squire; it's mortgaged for more than it's full value, now."

Squire Rollinson sighed, as he looked back into the past. The retrospection was far from pleasant; but that deluding proverb occurred to him, "What's done, can't be helped." A great mistake. If he had made up his mind that it *could* be helped, he would have found that difficulties vanish when perseverance pushes them out of the way.

"But I thought you had other matters in the back-

ground, that would not require your looking after more cash ? " said the lawyer.

" Yes ! Item—one son and one wife. Item—furniture, two horses, &c., and various other matters which need scarcely be particularised."

" I'm sorry, very sorry to hear it, Mr. Rollinson."

" I knew it, I was sure you would be. Have you not said that when the time came you would prove your friendship for me."

" Yes—ah—certainly." Then in a lower tone, " Dear me, how he smells of gin ! "

" Well, now, misfortune is a long lane, but it must have a turn some day. Meantime, just lend me £500. It'll be all right, you know ! "

But Close either didn't or wouldn't know.

" As I said before, I'd do a great deal to oblige you, Squire, but money is awfully scarce just now. In fact, I believe I have overdrawn my account at the County Bank already. Bad job—very sorry—"

" D—n your sorrow," said the Squire, now greatly incensed.

" Sir ! You forget the bounds of decorum, I fear. Recollect that you have beggared yourself, and now expect me to patch up your broken fortunes."

That is the most unkind cut, when a man helps you on to ruin, and then gliding out of the way, leaves you to the wreck, and blames you for causing it.

The Squire seized his hat, buttoned up his coat, and burst from the office with a loud imprecation on the head of its crafty possessor.

Surely a Reverend would not be quite so bad ?

After walking down a little of his hot temper, the Squire determined to make a last effort, and if that failed, why then—

Blank, hopeless, cheerless ruin stared him in the face. His tender-hearted wife would sink under it, and his delicate son would have to beg through the world.

The Reverend Harvey Sleigh was sitting at his ease when his visitor was announced. He welcomed him, of course. It is easy enough, that.

The Squire narrated the substance of his interviews with his two friends.

" Shameful ! shameful !" said the good man. " They who professed so much, too. I'm sure I can sympathise with you, sir, I can feel for you. I can offer you

sympathy, and advise you 'to lay up treasures in heaven.'

"Yes, the bible would tell me that. But I know you will help me through my little difficulties by lending me two or three hundred pounds."

"To be sure! to be sure," and the generous man went to his escritoir, when lo! he discovered that he had not an amount of any importance by him! "But I will see that you have it either to-day or to-morrow."

And so they parted; the Squire thinking that, after all, the world was not so bad as it looked, and that every man in it was not hollow-hearted.

Days passed, but either the Reverend gentleman had a short memory, or he was not desirous of remembering his promise. The Squire sent letters, but no answer came. He went in person, but the Reverend was always either 'engaged' or from home. He tried to catch his eye coming from church, but Mr. Sleigh had suddenly got a habit of looking and walking any way but that where the needy Squire was.

At last, the Squire had to succumb; his remaining effects were seized, he suffered the disgrace of having men dodge him and watch over all he had and all he did. His wife lay ill in bed, and his son, now only fifteen years old, gazed upon all that was taking place with a sort of stupid astonishment.

The evil day was only delayed, for the consummation of their ruin came at last. The Squire, his wife and son, were literally turned out of doors, and they had not where to lay their heads. However, they betook themselves to the house of a poor relative, whom they had sometimes assisted, and with the wreck of their fortune, tried to live a quiet and secluded life.

One would imagine that this was as low as the inebriate Squire could fall. Not so. When a man has been constantly accustomed to excitement, unless he control himself with an iron will, that excitement *must* be gratified. His wife, frail and tender, used her little influence with him; his relations added their entreaties; his young son even pleaded with him. All to no purpose. He was soon to be found at the tap-rooms, mingling with the lowest, and drinking with the most degraded. It seemed that he could fall yet lower.

One evening, he came not home. The night before, his wife had spoken to him more severely than was her

wont. She had told him that he was not only dragging himself down to ruin, but drawing others into the abyss. He sullenly said nothing. But he returned not, and as the hours passed on, the house was soon in an uproar.

Morning came, and a countryman brought into the house a hat and a neckerchief. His story was that he had found them by the river-side.

Mrs. Rollinson gave a loud shriek, and fell dead on the spot! Little Robert Rollinson went mad, and never again recovered his senses up to the date of our story.

It is such phases as these that the cynic sneers at as being overdrawn pictures. It is such stories as these that our opponents laugh at, and call fables. But we have rather underdrawn the picture. We have preferred to err on the side of truth, and the observer of human nature will bear us out, when we say that there are thousands of histories worse than that which we have sketched.

Poor Robert sank into a state of hopeless imbecility. For some time he scarcely spoke, nor took enough food to sustain life. He wandered about, after that, nobody knew where. But he returned every night, looking haggard, pale, and weary.

The poor relations they had hitherto lived with, left the neighbourhood, and the imbecile was more helpless than ever. But God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb. Several people who commiserated his misfortunes, commenced a subscription, and this, with the few pence he gained by little offices performed for the villagers, sufficed to keep away want, and it was not much that "Bob" required. Years rolled on, and it was seldom that people took the trouble to recollect that the idiot was once heir to the magnificent estates which now bordered closely on his humble abode at Taylor's, and now in the possession of a baronet—Sir Reginald Steyne.

One peculiarity, scarcely to be wondered at, was conspicuous in the lad. Under whatever circumstances, no matter in what society, Bob always spoke against drink, and invariably refused it; and though on ordinary matters he was laughed at, his warnings on this point generally came true, and it was seldom they mocked him, save those who were completely hardened.



But poor Bob's keenest reproofs, so far as his weak brain could frame them, were directed against Taylor. This man was in the receipt of good wages, but, as we have before seen, spent the most of his earnings at the ale-house. It will be recollected that he had murdered one of his children, while under the influence of drink. On that occasion, Sam Hargreaves was present. The lesson had long since been forgotten, and Taylor was worse than ever. It is not our province, at this portion of the story, to sketch that man's home, abounding, as every drunkard's home does, in squalid misery and gaunt poverty. His wife had argued with, cajoled and tempted him to stay at home, and not visit the tap-room so often. But to no purpose. What will not a woman do to save the man she loves from ruin; to keep entire and unpoluted the image she has set up in her own heart; to preserve spotless in her own mind, her ideas of his integrity and uprightness?

One night, Taylor was found by his poor lodger, lying by the river-side, where he was stretched at full length, drunk, and not a foot from the water. Bob looked hard at him, and a flash of intelligence seemed to pass through his brain, as his hand went over the hot forehead, and he said:—

“It ruined father; Bob knows it will ruin thee. It drowned father, it was like to drown thee. If it hadn't been for drink, poor Bob would have been a gentleman.”

Faithful as a dog, Bob carried home the inebriated man, and thus saved his life.

On another occasion, Taylor was found again in great danger. Drunk and staggering, he was walking home, along the line of railway which runs into Longford. Another instant, and he would have been launched into eternity, for just as a train came in sight along the same line of rail, Bob bounded across the fence, and literally *threw* the drunken man on the turf, out of danger, just as the engine whizzed past.

Taylor began bullying his deliverer as soon as he could speak.

“Did you want to die? No! no! no! Bob didn't think you were ready,” was all the answer to be got from the lad.

On the evening that Geoffrey was returning from Mossgrove, Taylor came home as usual—drunk, and found there his pale-faced wife, Bob, and his remain-

ing child, a pretty little girl of four years old. The wife's plan was to get her husband to go to bed immediately, but on this evening, he delayed a moment with the child.

"Now, Topsy—spose you—eh, (hiccup) kiss your—father—hm?"

The little thing shrunk back, and hid herself behind her mother.

"Now then—d' hear—come 'say—give us kiss—little beggar."

"Don't like! Me no love kisses. Shall I kiss, muvver?"

"Yes, my dear, go kiss father, he's going to bed."

The little girl timidly approached her drunken parent, as if afraid of contact with him. He pressed his thick, blue-looking lips to those of the child, so soft, so rosy, so delicate; as the warm pressure was given him, he scarcely thought that it would be the last, that ere morning he would murder another child!

The child was put to bed, her little lips formed the words—"God bless father, and make him a good man;" she sank into a slumber, from which she was only aroused in eternity, when angels bore her to heaven.

"Bob thinks you'd better take care of that light," said he to Taylor.

"Does the ass—think—(hiccup)—that—can't—'care—myself?" And the drunkard reeled upward to his chamber, where his wife left him, to busy herself about several household matters. Bob had retired to his bed, too.

The wife had been at work more than an hour, and all was silent as death; but in the midst of preparations for retiring, she heard, at a distance, a loud cry of "Fire! fire! fire!"

"Some poor neighbour has misfortunes as well as us," thought she.

"Fire! fire! fire!" This time the sound was nearer and clearer.

"Dear, where can it be?" thought she, hastily putting on her bonnet.

"Fire! fire! fire!" and now the sound of feet, patterning forward in their direction, struck upon her ear, and her heart beat wildly. Soon, the door of her house was hastily burst in, and a dozen voices shouted:

"Your house is on fire, missus; Where's your buckets, where's your water?"

"Fire?" shrieked the wife, and her eyes rolled

dreadfully; but, in an instant, she shouted out, "My child! my husband! save them!"

Before the words were out of her mouth, she opened the door that led to the staircase, and tried to ascend it, but a volume of smoke poured out; while the steps had caught fire, and were being rapidly consumed. Certain death would be the consequence of going up.

Mrs. Taylor was now almost mad, rushing about hither and thither, praying and beseeching everyone to save them.

The flames had encircled the house, and not a moment was to be lost.

A ladder was instantly placed at one of the windows, by Sam Hargreaves, and the bystanders began to think that he, who had borne so bad a character, was not so vicious after all.

Up he mounted, through the smoke, and dashing through the window, he presently descended with the idiot, who muttered, "Bob knew how it would be."

"Why didn't you bring the child and my husband?" shouted the wife. "Quick! quick! or they will be smothered." She was mounting the ladder herself, but a strong hand grasped and pulled her back. It was Hargreaves.

"It's no use trying. You'll be killed, to a certainty." He seemed to hiss out the words from between his teeth.

"Out of the way, murderer," shouted Geoffrey. "Let others try." Up he mounted, quick as lightning, and a flame played round the window he passed through, as if it had imprisoned him.

In an instant, he returned with the first form upon which he had laid his hands. It required more than ordinary strength to drag down a ricketty ladder the half-asleep inebriate who, by his carelessness, had caused the fire.

But the wife kissed and hugged him intensely. Not even drunkenness seems to quench the ever-enduring love of a good and noble wife.

"The child! the child!"

Ah! It is of no use; flames are bursting from every window. They shoot upwards, and unite in one great mass of flame. The roof falls in, and the apertures that once served for windows now show the white heat that rages within the house; while the bare, black

stone building stands out in strange contrast to the brilliant light it encloses.

Very soon the fire dies away, the charred beams lie inside the walls, crackling together in a great chaotic mass; little columns of smoke here and there ascend from them, and the outline of the little child's burial-place stands up against the blue sky, with a bright moon gilding the black ruin.

Poor little girl; one more brutal sacrifice on the exacting altar erected to Bacchus; one more innocent suffering for the guilty.

Bob was taken to Hargreaves' house. Taylor and his wife, the latter in a fainting state, were conveyed to a neighbour's. Soon, the place was again wrapped in slumber; and not many days after, an inquest was held over a few charred bones, the only remains of that beautiful little girl, and the verdict returned was "Died by the visitation of God."

It should have been "Died by the hand of a drunken father!"

CHAPTER VII.

"Though little now, the cloud will swell anon,
And thunders roar before the day be gone;
The lightning-flash illuminates all around,
And heaven's artillery fills the air with sound."

"Such unions should not e'er be rashly made,
Unguarded moments by a life have paid;
And they who seek God's altar, should so love
That life their earnestness may prove."

In the excitement caused by the fire, Geoffrey Wallis, for the time being, had forgotten his errors. But when it had subsided, and he was alone again, on his way homeward, the past came back to his mind with fearful distinctness. His conscience, which had been hushed to allow of his pursuing his own inclinations, now awakened within him something akin to remorse. Yet, thought he, what does it matter. 'Tis almost an impossibility for anyone to discover my secret.

A sudden check was put upon his thoughts; for Sam Hargreaves rose up before him, and the consciousness of being in the power of this man stung him acutely, and he felt that he could almost brave open confession to his father, rather than suffer the ignominy of being under the thumb of such a fellow—for he now began to know Hargreaves. Still, the latter was right, when he said that Geoffrey *dare not* confess.

As Rose Cottage came in sight, Geoffrey's spirits began to fail him ; they always did when he had to face his relations, feeling that they treated him as an honest man, when in reality he was as guilty as the most degraded felon. Hypocrisy was foreign to his nature, and as a consequence, it was a hard task for him to assume a mask that fitted him but badly.

Calling at an inn not very far from his own home, Geoffrey had a glass of brandy and water, drank that, and also another. He was then under the impression that, having properly "fortified" himself, he could assume the appearance of innocence with tolerable ease.

If he had only known the discovery which had been made ; could he but have guessed the sort of knowledge of which his father was now possessed ; had he been able to comprehend the estimation in which he was then held at home, he would have had no cause again to assume a mask which was distasteful because it was necessary.

Although it was nearly midnight when he reached home, Geoffrey was surprised to find that the drawing-room was lighted up, and evidently occupied by the whole family.

He had no sooner touched the knocker of the door, than it was opened—not by the servant, as usual, but by little Jenny, whose face was whiter than death ; her eyes wore a frightened expression, and were red and swollen with crying. She threw her arms round about her brother's neck.

" Well, sissy, and what is all this about, my girl ? What are you crying for ? "

" Ask yourself, Geoffrey. Oh, dear ! my heart will burst, I'm sure it will."

" But what about ? Come ! come ! open your mouth, Jane, or I shall think—"

" You cannot think worse than the truth, Geoffrey. Father has discovered all."

Geoffrey had not been told what the "all" meant, but his conscience smote him, and had a thunder-bolt fallen at his feet, he could not have seemed more frightened. For a moment he never spoke, but gazed upon vacancy, trembling violently. Suddenly, however, he seemed to have regained a consciousness of his position, and to have determined on a course of action. Removing his sister's soft hands from about his neck, he said :—

" You speak in riddles. What is all this fuss and nonsense about ? "

" Oh ! you know, brother. Indeed, you *must* know."

" I know nothing, until you condescend to explain yourself."

" The **SAFE**, Geoffrey ! You have taken £250, and father has discovered it."

As soon as she had said this, the poor girl fainted. Geoffrey laid her upon a sofa in an ante-room, and with a bold step, defiant expression, and as genuine an expression of innocence as he could assume, he made for the drawing-room.

As he opened the door, he saw that his entrance had caused a start from all the inmates. Notwithstanding, nothing was said to him that evening. Very likely James Wallis had an object in this. Be that as it may, the whole household soon afterwards retired to rest, and Geoffrey congratulated himself, while, as yet, there was no cause whatever.

In the morning, Mr. Wallis, in a thick and husky voice, requested that Geoffrey would stay at home and copy a long document which he placed before him. The son certainly could not refuse so strange a request, but at once set to work upon his task. He noticed that Alfred and his father left the house in earnest conversation.

The subject was not mentioned again to him by Jenny, and his mother carefully avoided making the slightest allusion to anything of the kind. It was a day of painful suspense to Geoffrey, for he could not but suspect what would be the upshot of all this mystery.

Mr. Wallis and Alfred again returned together, and the face of the former wore an expression of almost uncontrollable anger, while that of the latter was clouded with grief.

Two hours passed away, and then Mr. Wallis sent for Geoffrey to the library. Assembled there he found Mr. and Mrs. Wallis, Alfred, and the Reverend Harvey Sleigh.

His father opened the conversation by pushing towards Geoffrey several scraps of paper.

" Do you know those bits of paper ? " he began, in a stern voice.

" Know them—yes—of course. Just a few scraps of paper I covered over with—"

"Not bad imitations of my signature. So you would have committed forgery, sir?"

"FATHER! Do you know that you are speaking to your own son?"

(Very well acted, Geoffrey Wallis; yet wanting one great thing to back it—innocence.)

"I am very sorry to say I do. For I had rather follow you to your grave than have to say what I *must* say to you, ere you leave this room."

"I deny then, most solemnly, that I have ever committed that which you insinuate—forgery."

"Very well, we shall accept that, because we *know* that you did not. But it was not for want of the will, I believe."

"Am I to hear all this before strangers, father?" Geoffrey pointed to the Reverend gentleman, who winced slightly, and seemed about to rise.

"Sit still, Mr. Sleigh. I have determined that this exposure shall be made public. If a son of mine has courage to do wrong, surely he will not stick at trifles."

"Will you tell us what this wrong is, sir?"

"Yesterday night, I had occasion to open my safe, and I found that *someone* had very inadvertently left those scraps of paper there. Further, I next counted the contents of the safe, and found the sum of £250 short of the amount placed there some weeks ago."

"And I suppose you come to the conclusion that I am the culprit," said Geoffrey.

"Do not hurry yourself about my conclusions, sir. You will know them sufficiently early. I naturally was unwilling to believe my own flesh and blood guilty of robbing me, and so had resource to other means of discovering the thief. And now, I may as well tell you, sir, that you *are* he."

"Which I deny most indignantly. It is untrue, so far as I am concerned."

"Better to acknowledge what you have done," said the Reverend gentleman, anxious to say something.

"Hold *your* tongue, sir. It were better for you if you practised all the sermons you preach, and taught such doctrines as would lead no one into temptation."

Geoffrey did not *then* admire the teaching of Mr. Sleigh as he once had done, and accordingly spoke bitterly. The curate only held up his hands in utter astonishment.

"Take no notice of his insults, Mr. Sleigh; a cur at bay *will bark*, you know."

"Again, sir, I deny being deserving of this language. I am no thief!"

"You are! and worse, a liar as well. You can commit a wrong, and yet have not the courage to face the consequences of your own folly. You are a paltry coward."

"It may be nice amusement for you to launch all this at me, having no proof."

"Proof! I have more than sufficient to convince the most sceptical. Alfred, call the first witness. The criminal shall have fair trial before he hears his condemnation."

Within a few moments, the tall raw-boned figure of Angus James entered the room.

"Now, Mr. James, be good enough to refresh this young man's memory."

"Ou aye! It'll jist be paying him oot for that beat-ing he gied me."

If Geoffrey only dared, he would have sprung upon the Scotchman, and "throttled" him.

"Ye see, he got a wee bittie fou', and for the matter o' that, I daur' say we were a' rayther a bit gane. We were playing for siller. I won, an' he lost. He paid up like a gentleman, altho' to be sure, he was quite fou' by the time I'd won the hun'erd pounds."

"Liar!" hissed Geoffrey, between his teeth, "You shall pay for this."

Ou aye! Jist sae. Bud next time I encounter ye, m' mannie, I'll tak' varry guid care no to hae a bit drappie i' my 'een. Guid day to ye, gentlemen!"

"Now, sir, do you want any more proof?" growled Mr. Wallis.

"Ask yourself? What does this prove? Merely that I played and lost."

"And *whose* money did you lose? Alfred, call the next witness."

Geoffrey looked eagerly towards the door, and to his utter astonishment, Sam Hargreaves came forward, cap in hand, grinning most horribly.

"Villain!" said Geoffrey, in an under tone, "Have you turned informer?"

"Well, you see, Master Geoffrey, the governor said, to-day, as how he would give a free pardon and £100 to anybody in the establishment who could tell him

the chap that opened the safe, that is, provided the informer was not the actual man. So, as I thought it would pay me better to tell than to keep the secret, why I let the cat out of the bag."

Geoffrey hung his head; his face flushed hotly, and he saw no hope. The defiant expression had changed to one of humility and conscious degradation.

"Well, Sam Hargreaves, what do you know about this matter?"

"The porter can retire," muttered Geoffrey. "I know all he can tell you."

Sam was motioned out of the room, and, as he departed, he chuckled unfeeling.

"Well, I suppose no further proof is necessary now?"

"No!" That was a fearful monosyllable. Geoffrey long had cause to remember it.

Mr. Wallis now rose to his feet, and, with words of fearful import, said:—

"Geoffrey, you will leave this house to-night, never to return more! I disown you, and would beg, as the greatest reparation you can make me, that you will never own from whence you came, or whose child you were. From this moment, I entirely disclaim all connection with you—I would not have you sleep another night under my roof!"

"Father, do not, oh! do not be so harsh with him! Dear father—for my sake!"

It was Alfred who pleaded, but his father *scowled* him into silence, and Alfred well knew how useless it was to thwart that iron will.

"The Scripture saith—'Forgive them who despitefully use you,' and 'Do unto others as ye would that men should do unto you.' Be lenient, Mr. Wallis," said the Reverend Harvey Sleigh.

"Geoffrey no-name, at any rate, does not need *your* advocacy, Mr. Sleigh. When he does, he hopes he shall require it from one who is worthy the name of 'Reverend!'" said Geoffrey.

"But, husband, you will not, cannot mean to carry your threat into execution?"

"What I have said, I shall abide by. On me be the consequences."

"I do not wish you to change it, if you were ever so willing. The world is before me, and I am *not* too great a coward to go out into it, and earn my own

living. Even to-night, you will be obeyed, but *you will live to repent this, father!*"

Geoffrey left the library, and, within half-an-hour, the house; as he was going out, Alfred put a purse into his hand, and when the door closed behind him, he heard a pattering of feet, and a shrill voice shrieked out, "Geoffrey! dear Geoffrey!"

It was little Jenny, who, when she found that her brother had gone for ever, sank down upon the hall floor in a state of insensibility.

Outside, the afternoon was an ominous one. The rain fell in great sheets. It streamed off the house-top, it dropped from every leaf, and occupied the roads in long curling streams. A thick damp mist hung over the tops of the distant hills, and the sky was densely black. Everything was saturated, and it was a pitiable morning for anyone to brave. Occasionally, the wind dashed the falling rain in the face of any stray traveller, and each gust was succeeded by a silence only broken by the sounds of a thousand drops falling on as many leaves, which hung their heads and bent earthward under their heavy loads of moisture.

As Geoffrey left the enclosure which surrounded Rose Cottage, a figure, wrapped in a thick overcoat and slouched hat, approached him. It seemed to be making for the house, and shrunk within its heavy covering, as if to avoid as much as possible the drenching rain.

"What! Master Geoffrey?" It was Wilson's voice. "Has it come so soon?" I thought, at least, I should be in time to confound that villain!"

"Perhaps you also were to be one of my accusers?" said Geoffrey.

"Nay, nay, young master; not so. I would willingly take your place now, if I could. Do not suspect me because others have been against you. I came to say something for you, at a time when all was against you. Will you wait till I return? For if it *is* all over, I'll have my say, come what will."

"Wilson, forgive me! You are a true friend. But you do not know that you will only risk the loss of your situation, and cannot do me a service. Besides, how can you palliate—"

"I know what you mean, master! But don't I know how that villain, Hargreaves, tempted you, aye! and gave you the ways and means of doing what you did?"

"How did you know this, Wilson?" said Geoffrey.

"By a strange way. You know Bob Rollinson, the idiot; well, he saw all that passed in the counting-house, that day. Hargreaves, since that fire last night, thought of keeping him at his house, you will know why. But now, thinking he would require him no longer, the inhuman brute turned him out; and, though Bob is an idiot, he has sense enough to know the reason of this, and managed to tell me bits of the story, with which I meant to come, nay, I *will* go and confront that blackguard."

"Thank you, Wilson, but it is of no use. I am getting very wet, and must bid you good-night. I shall not forget this meeting, depend upon it."

"Sir! Let me beg one thing of you. Don't be offended, for I mean well, I do indeed. Pray don't touch any more spirits; you know it has made you all this trouble, sir!"

"It has, Wilson, you are right. I am *not* offended, and will think very seriously of what you have said."

"Ah! If you would but *promise*, you would make me happy."

"No, I won't do that, so you must be content with what I have said. Good-bye!"

"Good-bye! if it must be so. But, depend upon it, I shall not lose sight of you." A big tear-drop glistened in the eye of that honest porter, and as he brushed it away, he wrung the hand of Geoffrey, and passed quickly up the walk leading to the Cottage.

Let us say that Wilson persevered in his purpose; he was brought face to face with Hargreaves, who was, therefore, convicted of a great deal more than he would have had known. The facts thus elicited may have softened the heart of Geoffrey's father, but still it did not alter his determination, and Wilson returned home without having effected much good by his kindly-meant interference.

Geoffrey himself soon turned out of the highway into a bye-path, for he knew that Wilson would be returning, and he had no desire to meet him again, or to hear from his lips a further condemnation from Rose Cottage. So he turned into a lonely path, leading to Longford, with the knowledge that he was now an alien, and an outcast from home.

Arrived at Longford, after plunging through mud and mire, wet through, cheerless both inwardly and

outwardly, he knocked at the door of a humble public-house at the outskirts of the place. He waited several moments before any answer was vouchsafed.

Knocking again, a little round bald head appeared at an upper window.

"Well; who's knocking at a respectable man's door at this time of night?"

"A wayfarer, wanting a bed, which he can pay for."

"Oh! ah! That's another thing, of course. I'll be down in a minute."

And accordingly, a half-clad little figure, with a comical cotton night-cap surmounting the head, made its appearance. When the landlord opened the door, he was greeted by a smart gust, accompanying a deluge of rain.

"Bless me! Here's a night. What! Mister Wallis, as I'm alive."

"Yes! You're astonished, I see. Never mind; queer things *do* happen sometimes." He made a miserable attempt at a laugh. It sounded like a mockery of real feeling.

"Well, I *did* certainly hear things which made me astonished. But then, you know, sir, it's no business of mine to talk about my customers' failings."

"Ill news travels fast," is an old musty proverb, but it is a true one, nevertheless, and Geoffrey discovered it too soon. All Longford knew of his faults, and the very men who had urged him on to play, who had admired him, now condemned him the most unmercifully. People talked over his sin most charitably (in their way; pitied him, whilst they were certain he deserved all he had got). Sympathised with him, when they felt pretty certain that it would come to his ears, and thus vex him. Always knew there was nothing good about him, when, in point of fact, they used to laud him as the acme of perfection. The landlord of "The Green Man" had been heard to declare that "he always thought that young man would come to some bad ending," when, in reality, he generally came to the conclusion that Geoffrey was about the steadiest customer he had. When a man comes down in society, and more especially if he happens to have been a grade above the speakers, people have alarmingly good memories, and remember every fault, (and many that never had an existence, except in their fertile imaginations), and try to gain credit for astuteness and pro-

phetical powers, by emphatically declaring that they *knew* what it would all end in. Such folk are *cruelly kind* in their sympathy with fallen humanity. Perhaps it is a feeling of superiority which makes them think that they can, at least, part with a little "*pity*." People are very ready to give, when they know that the individual, whom they intend favouring, cares not to receive. It is often so in this world of inexplicable contradictions.

Geoffrey went to his humble bedroom almost the same moment he entered the house. It is not to be supposed that he went there to sleep. He took off his damp clothes, and laid them out to dry. Then throwing himself on the pallet, he gave himself up to thought. For the first few moments, so much crowded was his brain with various ideas, that he was bewildered and perplexed, and could seize hold of no one particular train of thought. But as the hours passed on, and comparative calm took the place of the conflicting emotions which had filled his mind, he began to realize his true position, which might have unseated the reason of stronger men than he.

He was alone in the world, which lay before him like a new and untrodden path, leading he knew not whither. He was like a child trying to walk, unconscious of what strength might be required for the effort. Life was before him, but the Great Book of the Future was sealed to him, and he felt like a man undertaking a long journey blindfolded. He was, as we have said, alone in the world, with no one to care for him.

Stay ! In what direction have his thoughts turned now ? There *is* someone who cares for him. No matter what might befall him, *she* would still care for him. No matter how low he had fallen, that angel would still try to raise him up. It would not matter to her how low the clouds had descended over his head, she would still bear him company ; nor if all the world disowned him, would she ever give him up. Geoffrey knew this, and felt it. He loved Jessie Ryle quite as much as she loved him, and confident in that love, he determined on a course of action with her, which was soon carried into execution.

There were others who really cared for Geoffrey. Little gentle-hearted Jenny would have changed places with her brother, rather than he should have had to

leave home. But of what avail was her pity against the anger of a man whose will was generally law. Alfred cared for him, but though sorry at the extreme sentence which his father had chosen to carry out upon his brother, yet he could not help thinking that, by contact with the world, in experiencing its various phases, and by having to cleave a way for himself amongst the moneys-thirsting crowds, Geoffrey would some day return to them a better and a wiser man. And did not his mother care for him? Ask yourselves; ask your own hearts. It is poignant grief enough to see her offspring's errors. But when he is cast out into the world, friendless, portionless, and homeless, then, indeed, it is scarcely to be wondered at, that her heart yearns towards him, and that she would gladly welcome back her prodigal son, if he would come home humbled and repentant. But she, like her sons and daughter, had been accustomed to yield implicit obedience to the will of Mr. Wallis.

We would ask the reader to pause here for a moment, whilst we draw his attention to the fact, that much of the trouble which had now fallen upon the Wallis family, might have been averted by judicious training of their children on the part of the parents. It is all very well to argue within yourself, that as *you* have safely followed a certain course of action, your children may do the same. You cannot be certain of this, and ought to act accordingly. Had Mr. Wallis and his wife been less indifferent, and less unmindful of their son's actions; or had they entirely discountenanced the habit of drinking, which they saw he was acquiring, our narrative might not have required writing. We have heard of a son, who was just on the point of being led to the gallows, saying to his own father—"I am to be hanged, and *you* have murdered me. Had I never acquired the habit of drinking at your table, I should not have been what I am." It seems to be forgotten by parents, that habits may gradually be acquired at home which will never leave their children. Be they habits which tend to good, or be they those which tend to evil, both will cling tenaciously to the child through after life. Our argument, therefore, is that those habits which we know, and can prove, have led to evil in thousands of cases, should be banished from the table and from the home. Drinking is amongst the worst and most insidious of these, and it

is this custom, the disappearance of which would bring no permanent inconvenience to a family, whose disuse we advocate.

Just before dawn, Geoffrey sank into a sleep of short duration; waking, at last, to a consciousness that it was necessary to be "up and doing." He yet cherished an idea that, though his circumstances were not good, and his prospects still worse, he could surmount all the difficulties he might encounter. He still had confidence in himself.

He rose; his heart loaded oppressively with a keen sense of his isolation. As soon as he made his appearance, the landlord advanced with smiling face, washing his hands, as Hood says, "with invisible soap." He hoped to make something, even by the unfortunate; to live by the dying, as it were.

"Good morning, Mr. Geoffrey. Can I serve you with anything, sir? You look rather pale and wearied. A dram would set you up, I warrant."

"Let me have one, then, for I do not feel over and above well."

He took his seat in a corner of that *sanctum sanctorum*, the "bar parlour," and the beverage was expeditiously set before him.

If we were so disposed, quite a little essay might be written about the "bar parlour." It is generally a "sacred" place, (or so it is irreligiously styled by the proprietor thereof) in which the so-called *respectable* portion of the community indulge their appetite for drink. Here you will find the men who have left the cheerful fireside at home, for the company of bacchanalian revellers. Here you will find the literary man, the man of law, the young man who is ashamed to drink more openly. Here you will find they "most do congregate," whilst the landlady, her face radiant with smiles, and her pockets jingling with silver, looks down upon them from her throne at the bar. No doubt, those *within* think themselves vastly different to those *without*; though amongst the latter may be the beggar, expending the alms he has just received for a glass of gin; the artisan, spending the money, for which he has toiled and sweated, in that which brings no corresponding advantage; the wife, mis-spending the hard-earnings of her husband; the young woman, lost to shame and virtue, seeking in drink for unnatural courage to face degradation of the worst description;

or still worse, as we can testify, the minister of the gospel, so lost to a sense of his high and important functions, that even he can mix with the crowd *outside* the bar, in order to gratify his appetite. We say those *within* do often think themselves better than those *without* the bar. But in what? Only that they have a glossier coat, or a few more sovereigns. The same impulse has drawn all of them together; for in the drink-shop, as in death, all are equal.

Geoffrey sat, with his glass before him, in this parlour. He moodily hung his head, and thought of that terrible scene on the evening before. To expect forgiveness, he knew was to expect an impossibility; nor, in his present frame of mind, did he desire it. His was not the kind of disposition which can tamely bear the smarts and stings, consequent upon losing the confidence of those who formerly loved him.

Towards noon, after having patronised the landlord's potations to a considerable extent, he left the house, and turned into a by-path which led towards Mossgrove.

His gait was not over steady, but only those who knew him well would have discovered the difference. As he crossed the last field, just as he was entering the wood which, as already stated, led to the romantic little cottage, he encountered Mrs. Ryle, who, with a little basket on her arm, was going towards Longford.

"Why, Geoffrey, is that you? What brings you here at this time of day?"

"Just a momentary whim. I have not much to do to-day, [that was true] so I thought I could not spend my time better than with Jessie."

"She will be glad to see you. But is it usual with you to take spirits so early in the day?" said the widow, with a tinge of suspicion in her voice.

"Why—no! But—I met a friend on the way, and for once *did* indulge."

Unless he meant the landlord, who would as soon have kicked him out of the house as not, had he been moneyless, this was a most palpable falsehood.

"I wish I could persuade you to give up taking intoxicating drinks, Geoffrey!"

"Why, mam, the man who makes a beast of himself, *should* take the pledge; but, for my part, I think it is only fools and cowards who put their signatures to a bit of paper, with a promise never to 'touch, taste, or handle.'"

"And yet men, much wiser than you, have done so."
"Let them think as they will; I have a right to do as I please."

"Do you know what a clever writer says, Geoffrey?—and it cannot be quoted too often—'No man has a right to do as he pleases, unless he pleases to do right!'"

"But can you prove that I am not doing right?"

"I leave that to your own conscience, for I have not time to stay parleying. I must be back before dark, so good-bye to you," and the widow trudged away.

"Nothing could have happened more opportunely," thought Geoffrey, as he went on his way. "And it is evident that the old lady has heard nothing about me."

Arrived at Mossgrave, he, of course, found Jessie alone. As soon as he saw her, he caught the young girl in his arms, and passionately kissed her. She returned his embrace, for the reader already knows that she warmly loved Geoffrey.

Jessie's eyes sparkled with pleasure, for Geoffrey's visits of late had not been so frequent, and she had consequently learned to value them more.

"You seem as glad as ever to see me, darling?"

"Ought I not to be, Geoffrey? Besides, your visits are now seldom than they used to be, and I had need be glad when you do favour me."

"You note these things very minutely, Jessie?"

"Indeed, I do. Do I not pray for you, think about you, wonder, too, whether you are coming, all the day long. It is natural then, that when you have been constantly the one subject of my thoughts, I should be more than glad when you come to Mossgrave?"

"This being the case, love, would you not like to be constantly with me? Would you not be happier if you and your Geoffrey were always together?" Geoffrey spoke hurriedly, and as Jessie held down her head, and her heart beat audibly, he pressed her towards him, and said in a low, tremulous voice, "Come, love! tell me."

"Between us, there should be no secrets, Geoffrey. You know well how much I love you, would it not, then, be the consummation of my hopes to be your wife?"

"Thank you, dear Jessie, for that. Now, I have a proposition to make which will test the strength of your affection for me."

"Tell it me. I am sure that if it depends upon the strength of my love, it will, indeed, have to be amongst the 'impossibles' if I cannot bear it."

"You must know, then, that I have lately had a quarrel with my father, and—"

"A quarrel, love! Pray, what is it about?"

"Never mind that, Jessie; the knowledge would do you no good, and would do others harm; so do not ask me. I intend leaving this neighbourhood, to-morrow, for London, and my 'test' is, to speak openly, that you should marry me by special licence, and that we both make the journey together."

"Oh, Geoffrey! Is this a dream, or do you mean what you say?"

"It is all truth, darling; and you must either accede to my proposition, or the chances are that you may never see me again."

Jessie clung still more closely to her lover.

"But it is so sudden—so unexpected. Surely you do not wish me to leave home, and my dear mother, without *some* preparation?"

"The exigency of the case admits of none, Jessie. I have put the plain facts before you."

"Mother will be here soon, and I will ask her advice."

"That must not be done; her consent will never be obtained."

"But you *do* not expect me to leave home without her consent?" Jessie's eyes dilated and her bosom heaved, under this unwonted excitement.

"I do. It will be all right afterwards."

"I cannot, Geoffrey. If this is the test, all I can say is, that if you are bent upon putting a sense of wrong, and breaking the fifth commandment, against my love for you, and require me to commit the first, in order to secure your love, you ask me to do an unjust thing, and I cannot obey you."

"So be it, Jessie. Then I conceive that our conversation is at an end." He took up his hat, and prepared to go. "To-morrow, I shall do as I have told you. It will cost *me* something to lose you, but if you are not prepared to make some sacrifice for me, then surely I need not feel such a poignant regret. Good-bye, love, good-bye!"

The hand he took was cold as ice, and he could feel a damp sweat upon it. But as his footsteps crackled over the dry leaves, Jessie shrieked out the one word,

"Geoffrey!" and on this occasion, unlike a similar one which happened when he left home, he heard the cry, and bounded back again to the side of her he loved.

"Well, love, do you consent? Speak, and be resolute in your determination."

"Anything, anything, Geoffrey, rather than lose you!" And with those words, poor Jessie burst into a flood of hot, scalding tears.

"My darling, I will endeavour to pay you for your sacrifice."

That brought back to the recollection of Jessie, the tender mother whom she would leave behind her, cheerless, deserted, and heart-broken. It reminded her of that mother's advice regarding Geoffrey's habits; it warned her of the "unfathomable future" into which she was about plunging, trusting herself entirely to the guidance of him she loved. But her love was strong, and she had not the courage to face the alternative of a refusal.

"You will promise me, Jessie?" said Geoffrey.

"I will; I do." She almost uttered the words mechanically.

"I shall be here again for you at twelve o'clock to-night. Meantime, keep up your spirits, and let the thought—that I could not leave this neighbourhood without you, be sufficient to compensate you for any sacrifice of feeling you may have to make."

Again he kissed her, but, as contrasted with the kiss at meeting, it was like shadow and sunlight, death and life, cold and heat.

* * * *

Back again to the "bar parlour," where Geoffrey was, soon after the above conversation, to be seen. One by one, what the landlady termed "a goodly company" began to assemble. There was Jones, editor of the *A—Chronicle*; Smith, who had written a book; Fangs, the apothecary; our old friend, Jack Jenkins; Harry Harland, and a few others.

Geoffrey had scarcely been seated ten minutes, before the landlady whispered that a gentleman wished to speak to him most particularly.

Wondering who it could be, Geoffrey left the room, and immediately confronted the manly figure of Andrew Dean, whose general appearance was very different to what it had once been. Mr. Dean, as he

was now called, immediately put out his hand to Geoffrey, and said :—

“ Geoffrey, I am sorry to learn what I have heard about you.”

“ I’m much obliged to you for your sympathy, still I do not know that I am in any need of it,” said he, rather sarcastically.

“ Once, you tendered *me* advice, though I considered that I was not in need of it, and that it could not come very gracefully from you.

Geoffrey acknowledged the justice of the remark, and Andrew resumed.

“ Since that night, when I meditated throwing my life in the face of my Creator, I have, as you know, been a changed man. The pledge has done a great deal, but Christianity has done more. The first has been the handmaid of the latter, and now, through God’s help, I am in a respectable position; totally unlike my former self. I can now command the esteem of others, when, in days gone by, I was only a reproach and an eye-sore to society !”

“ Yes! of course. But what has this to do with me?”

“ All this has been effected by my giving up drink. At first, I was employed in various little jobs about the *L—— Times*. I am now one of the reporters, and am occasionally allowed the privilege of writing the leading article. If total-abstinence can effect this in so short a time for me, it can do as much for you. To induce you to follow my example I have sought you out, hearing that it was probable you would leave the neighbourhood.”

“ I’m afraid you have not much chance of success. *I have not yet killed my mother by my habits.*” Ah! that was a bitter, cruel, heart-stinging reproach.

Andrew Dean burst into tears.

“ I deserve all that you or others can say about that. I mourn for her night and morning. I wear the sincere badges of sorrow all day long, and were it not that God answers my prayers for strength, I should sink under the consciousness of my sin.”

There was a silence of two or three minutes, during which Geoffrey began to feel uneasy, and evidently wanted to end the interview.

During this pause, Jack Jenkins and Harry Harland came out to find Geoffrey, and to learn the cause of his being absent.

"Why, Andrew Dean, by all that's wonderful!" said Jack. "Where have you been these last few weeks? One never sees your phiz now, my boy."

"I have been at my occupation. More work and less pleasure than formerly."

"Then you're a fool, that's all I can say, my lad. A life of pleasure for me, and as little work as possible. That's my creed, and an admirable one, too!"

"Do you think it answers well, Jack? Do your mother and sister think more of you for it? Do they, or does any steady, respectable member of society, admire your creed?"

"Why, no! But then there are always some old croakers in the world, you know. Life's short, cut it fat whilst you are alive, and——"

"When it is ended. *What then?*"

"Oh! why, I suppose——. But what's the use of speculating? Will you come and have a glass? Here's your old friend, Geoff, and Harry there, with a host of choice spirits."

"I'll back the invitation," said Harry. "You can handle the cue yet, I suppose?"

"I never mean to handle one any more; and, gentlemen, I am a *teetotaler*, so that you see I am scarcely likely to join your party. In fact, I came here for the express purpose of getting Mr. Geoffrey Wallis to follow my example."

"Oh, dear! Ha! ha! ha! And so you are a 'rare, genewine tea-totaler,' eh?"

"Yes, I am very proud to own it; and when I see anyone laughing at me, it only increases my resolution, while it sinks the scoffer in *my estimation*."

"Dear me! Perhaps you've taken holy orders on 'pump' principles."

"I hope I have. I only wish you had done the same."

"La! If anybody had only told me that Andrew Dean would become a water-drinker, I should have laughed at the insinuation as much as I do at the reality," said Harry.

"I met your father, not long since," said Andrew, "seeking his son in every pot-house of the town. Do you think *he* would laugh if you changed your principles? Do you imagine that it is no degradation to him to have to seek you in these places?"

Harry Harland slunk back into the bar-parlour.

"Now, Geoffrey, what say you to the proposition I made you? Do not refuse me, or I can almost venture to say that you will live to repent it bitterly."

"Absurd! It's out of the question. I *might* have said to you at one time, with a great show of justice, 'Physician, heal thyself.'"

"I have, with God's help, done so. I have now a right to persuade others."

"I'm hearing a good sermon," said Jack, "better come and join us, Andrew, my boy; there's a glass of your old beverage, and a goodly company, waiting for you!"

"No! Am I then to bid you good-bye?" said he to Geoffrey.

"For all the good you can do, yes!" And Geoffrey followed Harry Harland, being speedily joined by "rollicking" Jack Jenkins.

We have often heard people say that a man must take the pledge because he is a coward, and has not courage enough to resist temptation. Never was there a greater error. It needs more courage to keep the pledge, than to stop drinking at a certain point. The teetotaler is not laughed at so much as he was in days gone by. He is now respected, for his principle has been well-tried, and found of incalculable benefit to humanity, second only to Christianity in its ennobling effects. Still, for a man to withdraw himself from boon companions, even in these days, is looked upon by those companions as an act of folly and squeamishness, and is, therefore, visited upon him in the shape of jeers and laughter, which too often succeed in shaking him out of his good resolution. *This* is where true courage is required, and where, if he give way, the penalty is often paid by a life of sin and misery. It has been so in *thousands* of cases; it ever will be so, as long as the drinking customs exist.

When Geoffrey returned to his companions, he found Smith, the author, occupying the chair. He was just about making a speech, as Geoffrey sat down and called for a glass of brandy.

"Order! order! for the chair," shouted several voices.

"Gentlemen, I thank you for your intention to pay attention to what I may mention. I rise to propose a health which we shall perhaps drink for the last time. (Signs of great emotion.) The gentleman I refer to has often been the life and soul of convivial meetings

like the present. Being aware of this, and knowing that our friend intended leaving the neighbourhood, I took the liberty of assembling a few of his intimates here. Gentlemen, I have heard, you have all heard, the calumnies which have been launched at the head of our companion. We sympathise with him, we know he does not deserve them. [At this, Geoffrey looked up boldly; he knew not how little the chairman really did believe what he was saying.] I am sure we can all feel for the misfortunes of another. I will therefore call upon you to charge, while I propose the health and future prosperity, wherever he may go, of our friend Mr. Geoffrey Wallis!"

And so the foolish custom was again perpetrated, and the company drunk to the good health of one, and in so doing, perhaps took away part of their own.

Fangs, the apothecary, was a noted character. Clever and well versed in all parts of his profession, he still found that his customers were gradually dropping off. For we cannot wonder that in a business where all the faculties are required, people necessarily seek for the steadiest man. Fangs was not to be found at "The Apothecaries' Hall" until noon every day, and then generally came with his head so muddled, that he could scarcely tell sugar of lead from cream of tartar or arsenic. To run the risk of being poisoned was therefore far from satisfactory, and Fangs gradually found that, like Othello, his "occupation" was almost "gone."

On the present occasion he followed in the track of Smith, eulogizing everybody and anybody, (he was not very particular when he had had two or three glasses of rum and water) and Geoffrey in particular, and as he endeavoured generally to blend business with pleasure, concluded by calling the "particular attention" of his audience to a new pill which he termed "The Pill of Life; beautifying the body; [we wonder Fangs didn't take some himself] revivifying the faculties; [no doubt he took them often] purifying the blood; [judging from the hot, red pimples, upon Fangs' nose, the medicine could not be very efficacious] and producing a great many other beneficial results;" the moderate price demanded for this wonderful cure-all, (which one would think nearly all the company would now and then require) being only sevenpence halfpenny per box.

After the laughter and applause which followed the speech of the apothecary had subsided, and he had run the gauntlet of a great many jokes respecting the properties of the pills, what they were made of, and questions of the like tendency, the chairman called upon Jack Jenkins for a comic recitation. It was useless to say "comic" Jack dealt in nothing else; but as it does not touch upon our subject matter, we shall not inflict it upon the reader; we shall merely trouble him with two short speeches, those of the editor and Geoffrey.

The editor was a corpulent man, with a great deal of bounce and swagger about him, accompanied, as these traits invariably are, with a good opinion of himself.

"In rising to propose my toast, gentlemen, I will trouble you with a few remarks. I've been thinking, whilst I sat there, what a glorious privilege it is of old England, that we can meet thus in jolly companionship, enjoy ourselves rationally, and do no harm to ourselves nor anybody else; [it is not often so]. Gentlemen, it is this glorious privilege that has made England what it is, [England has a poor reputation then, if it stands upon the foundation of a pot-house,] it is the exercise of their freedom which has given her sons the position they now hold; [not the exercise of their tippling propensities, anyhow] it is a grand, a glorious privilege, that of being able to do as you please, so long as you do not harm the laws of the land. [Ah! there's a great deal of harm done under the name of freedom, which is not punishable by the laws of the land!] no doubt some of you would see my last leading article, which I make bold to say was one of the most telling ever written, [he should have added, "in the *A—— Chronicle*"] the subject of which was "England's greatness and its foundations." Gentlemen! there has been a great talk about shutting up public-houses, the Maine law and such like rubbish, Are we Englishmen, that we even suffer such a question to be mooted? Is it our fault that so many thousands die annually through drink? are we to be made pay the penalty of other people's faults? What have I to do with my neighbour? [If the editor had read his Bible, he might probably have been enlightened on this point.] Am I to give up my own pleasures, because he exceeds the boundaries of wisdom?

[Has that cap never fitted you, Mr. Editor?] Shut up the Inns? why not shut up the shops of the Baker, the Butcher, or any other tradesman? [Because the first can be done without, with great benefit to society at large, whilst the latter are indispensable.] Freedom of action is every Englishman's birthright, and if he likes to get drunk, who shall say no! [His wife, family, and the law.] Gentlemen, I conclude by recommending you to read my last splendid leading article, where you will find this question completely settled, and I call upon you to drink my toast:—"A good glass of wine; may we never want one for ourselves or a friend."

The editor sat down amid perfect storms of applause, but it is to be hoped that for the sake of common sense, very few people read his "last splendid leading article," for we may remark that long after Geoffrey left the company, both Jack, Harry, Fangs and even the author and editor, were to be found either leaning back in their chairs, drunk, senseless and exhausted, or under the table, in close companionship with spittoons, cock-roaches, spilt liqueurs, and broken glasses. Amongst those totally unable to preserve an upright position, were the editor and the author. The former rested his huge paunch upon a dirty copy of his leading article, shewing by strong comparison, theory and practice, and exemplifying in the person of the writer, the infallibility of his arguments, and the results of the "*glorious privilege*" of being able to "*do as you please!*"

Towards eleven o'clock, Geoffrey rose to his feet, and though less inebriated than most of the company, he was still "the worse" for what he had taken.

"I rise to thank you for your expressions of goodwill towards me. I am no speech-maker, but still I can heartily appreciate your kind feeling. I will say nothing about recent occurrences; [very judicious] I leave Longford with regret, for I have spent many happy hours in your company, and shall remember them in the future. I hope to make a path for myself in the world, and to return to you some day, better than when I left you."

Geoffrey then wished them all "good night," and with some instructions to a post-boy whom he had engaged, bent his steps once more towards Mossgrove.

One would have thought that as Geoffrey Wallis

had had courage enough to concoct and propose his plan, he would have been able to carry it through without much emotion or hesitation. But it was not so. He could not hide from himself the fact that he had persuaded Jessie to commit an act of filial disobedience, and that he was now about to assume a responsibility, the weight of which he had scarcely stopped to calculate. He had undertaken to provide a home for a wife, when in reality he had no home for himself. He had undertaken to guide her through life, while he felt conscious that she was more capable of doing the same service for him. He had asked her, and she had consented, to share his name and reputation, when the latter, at any rate, was none of the fairest or brightest.

With these and various other thoughts occupying his mind, Geoffrey neared the quiet little cottage at Mossgrove. The old widow had long since retired to rest. When Jessie kissed her and wished her "good night," a tear stood in the eye of the young girl, and she turned hastily away, to conceal the anguish that was swelling up in her heart.

Retiring to her room, with a tremulous hand she commenced packing up a few little things which could easily be removed. Amongst the rest she strung round her neck a small, but very beautiful, miniature of widow Ryle. The countenance seemed to smile upon her with all the fondness of a mother's warm love; over and over again Jessie kissed the smile of the parent whom she loved—how tenderly, who shall say?

This done, and two or three other little trinkets having been secured, she then wrapped a warm mantle around her, put on her bonnet, and sat down to wait.

It would have been better for her peace of mind, had she not given herself leisure in which to think. To look around upon the old familiar objects, the recollections of which were interwoven with remembrances of her earliest childhood; to ponder over the fact that she was leaving these, and everything else which she had hitherto thought sacred, and this under circumstances not at all favourable to her reputation, caused her to shed bitter tears. But she never wavered. Though her heart beat wildly, her resolution never faltered.

"I can influence him I know; I may make him

better than he is or can be, I can do much for him, I can persuade him to leave off those habits which mother detests ; for he loves me." Ah ! Jessie, Jessie ! Many a young girl has thought the same, has conjured up fair visions of what *her* influence could effect in the future. But she has had to awaken from her dream, she has had to step down from the throne of fairyland to the prosy realities of wifedom. She has had to awake and find that the passion of a lover can soon sober down into the authority of the husband, that the honeyed *words* of courtship often become the *command* of matrimony, that the devotion of the honeymoon has merged into the austerity of domestic life. It is not so always ; God forbid that it should ; but if the girl undertake the reformation of a man by the power of her love, she undertakes that which in most cases, signally fails. It is a dangerous experiment, in which the weakest risks her all upon the *chance* of his reformation.

With all these doubts rushing through her mind, Jessie waited at the lattice until she heard the footsteps of him for whom she was about to sacrifice everything, to share his banishment and his fortunes, whatever they might be.

" Jessie ! my own dear Jessie." Ah ! If Jessie could only have known how many "glasses" Geoffrey had taken, even before coming to meet her on such an important night as this, she would have hesitated, she would have looked before she leapt.

" The intimation from Geoffrey had been given in a low tone, and the young girl answered it by closing the lattice, and softly unbolting the little door within the porch.

" I must not let him see that I am sad. He will think I have no confidence in him." So saying she tried to assume a joyousness which she was far from feeling, and before she had touched the hand of Geoffrey, was sadder than ever.

" Geoffrey ! dear Geoffrey. If you love me, release me from my promise!"

" Release you, love. Come, this is folly. You will not repent this change ?"

" That is it. I *shall* repent, not the change, but, I am afraid, this step !"

" Well, Jessie. I will still allow you to choose. Win me, or lose me. Say now !"

"Is there no alternative, dear Geoffrey? Propose some other course. I will bless you for ever, if you will only tell me some method whereby I can still prove that I love you dearly, and yet need not disobey dear mother to shew you this."

"Jessie love, I would do so willingly; but I have thought the matter over. I am leaving this neighbourhood for good, and may never return to it. You must decide."

If you could have seen Jessie distinctly, you might have noticed that when she heard this, she drew up her figure, heaved a sigh, and with a resolution which was expressed by the rigidity of her facial muscles, said sternly "*let us go then, at once.*"

At this moment a window opened from above, and the two lovers distinctly heard the widow say; "I'm sure I heard noises, as of some one whispering. I see nothing though; all is still; I must have been mistaken."

Jessie shuddered, and yet drank in for the last time the music of that sweet voice, the one that had lulled her in infancy's sleep, and endeavoured to guide her in the path of right, from which she was now deviating.

"Come love; courage. Remember! you will soon be my own dear wife."

"I am ready; mark me, dear Geoffrey! I trust in you, I hope I am acting for the best, but I am afraid that it is not so. However, if you can recompense me for the loss of a dear mother, and cause me never to feel the want of home, I shall be content."

Together, they left the rustic cottage behind them, and as they passed through the wood, guided by the light of the moon, Jessie clung closely to the arm of her companion; she knew now, that he was the only one she could ever look to; for she, like him, would, after this act of disobedience, be banished for ever from her home.

Almost in silence, except an occasional word of courage which Geoffrey whispered in the ear of Jessie, they passed over the road leading to Longford.

At the outskirts of the town, they were met by the postboy.

"Is all in readiness as I told you?" questioned Geoffrey.

"Ees! the' be, zur. T'portmantel be there an' all as you arderd. Ees."

"That's right. Now you go on before and be ready to start at once."

"A few hundred yards further and Geoffrey handed Jessie into a post-chaise. The postboy cracked his whip, and they were soon rattling along on the road to M——, where they arrived after a rapid journey of five hours.

It was about break of day as Geoffrey summoned the vicar; (a worthy old gentleman as the villagers called him) but he did not require much summoning, he was evidently on the gin *vive* and soon made his appearance in the little parlour where the two lovers sat waiting for him.

On his arrival, Geoffrey found that all the preliminaries had been arranged, and they could be married at once. The postboy and a kitchen maid constituted the witnesses, and the ceremony was at once begun.

During its progress, Jessie could not help noticing that the "worthy vicar" was the worse for liquor; that his voice was exceedingly husky and thick, whilst his utterance was extremely uncertain and tremulous.

That he was intoxicated, there could be no doubt whatever, for he went through the solemn service with his eyes half closed, while his breath smelt horribly of gin.*

Having shuffled through the beautiful marriage service in this blasphemous manner, he joined together, by his act, the lives of the two people who stood before him.

"*For better or for worse.*"

Those are words of fearful import to you, Jessie, of more consequence than to Geoffrey. And you have risked it out of pure love for he who may one day throw the gift in your face, and call it valueless.

The mouths of the post boy and kitchen maid were stopped with gold, and so it was unlikely that they would let the cat out of the bag; though, to be sure it would have been of little consequence, only that we like those acts which we even *suspect* to be foolish, to be concealed as long as possible from those we love.

By an early train, Geoffrey and his young bride, whose fate was now so indissolubly united to his, took their places. Their destination was London!

* To those who may possibly imagine this to be an invention of the author, as a means of heightening his story, he wishes to state that, in this, (as in all other acts of his *Dramatis Personae*) he can parallel the case by reference to a marriage conducted in this shocking manner, which did actually take place in a cathedral city of a very important diocese.

As the train moved onward, Jessie recovered much of her usual elasticity of spirits. For was she not now the wife of the man she loved? Had she not all her life to spend with him, in whose presence she had always felt happiest? and with these thoughts in her mind, she would smile lovingly upon her husband, who, to do him justice, loved her with all the devotion of which he was capable.

But then her thoughts would revert back to Mossgrove.

Ah! could she but have seen that widowed mother, when the discovery of her child's desertion burst upon her loving heart, she would have been grieved indeed. The idiotic stare of blank amazement which was written on the lonely widow's face; the shriek of despair, followed by a long wail of intense anguish; the days of fever and illness, mingled with cries for her Jessie, her hope, her only love! but she recovered. The reed bent before the storm, and rose up again, bruised, broken, but not utterly crushed.

Geoffrey and his bride reached the metropolis at noon, and he hurried her to lodgings in Somers Town, where he knew he could be certain of them. They were not very pretentious, yet not very poor. Altogether, they suited his present purpose, and as for Jessie, she cared not now where she stayed, every place would be alike to her, so long as she retained the love of her husband.

CHAPTER VIII.

"The storm has passed and morning breaks
Upon a scene of wide-spread wreck;
And as we gaze, the crush'd heart aches—
For nature has sustained a check."

"Touch not! taste not! danger's there—
Lay drinks records throughly bare,
Then there will be cause for prayer;
Touch it none would surely dare;
Trifles, seeming light as air,
Oft produce a world of care,
Future visions, prospects fair,
Oft into a mirage wear!"

It was a cheerless, comfortless morning that dawned upon the inmates of Rose Cottage; the events of the night had unnerved everyone. Mrs. Wallis kept her bedroom and was inconsolable. Alfred went to the factory, had to conduct all the business of the day

himself, and finally returned only to find that his father had suddenly been taken ill.

Little Jenny glided about the house with a frightened look, endeavouring as well as possible to perform those duties hitherto undertaken by her mother. *She* felt intensely desolate. It was no sort of comfort to know that her brother deserved the punishment he had received, that he merited all the misfortunes which, as she guessed, would now fall upon him. Indeed, this reflection but heightened her grief, for she thought that this would have been a good opportunity for her father to have administered a stinging reproof (she never imagined his displeasure would go further, until it was actually put in force) and thus have turned Geoffrey from his bad ways, and restored him every evening, to their own fireside.

Yes! a decided blow had fallen upon Rose Cottage. Its honour, so thought Mr. Wallis, had been tarnished, and he felt as if he could more easily die, than face the enquiries, the misplaced sympathy, and perhaps the uncharitable reflections of those who knew not the entire facts of the case. He had passed the remainder of that memorable night in intense agony, what his thoughts were, not even his own wife could tell; but he rose up during the dark hours, and listening to the out-pouring of the storm, seemed wrapped in thought. Whilst he was gazing out upon the dreary prospect beyond the cottage garden, his son was plodding on towards Longford, wet, weary, but far from despairing.

Mr. Wallis seemed to be looking into the past. It had suddenly occurred to him that if he had punished his son, he had partially encouraged him in his downward progress. If he had not actually countenanced his absence from home, and his drinking habits (the latter, as we have seen, sometimes verging on excess) he had never firmly set his face against them. There are sins of omission as well as of commission!

The father was not a man to altar his resolution for all that; but even the very consciousness of this, caused him to be more excited than usual. Big drops of perspiration burst through his skin, for he felt keenly the act he had done. 'Twas as though he had buried a son, and was partially the cause of his death. But he had opened his eyes too late. He was too conscientious and too upright a man not to perceive at once, that father and son had both been in the

wrong, and that while the latter was suffering punishment, the former was escaping.

But Mr. Wallis could not see further than the present, though even now, retribution was falling upon him. When he returned to bed he was cold and clammy, and sleep only visited his eyelids when his body was thoroughly exhausted with restlessness.

He awoke late in the morning, feverish and ill. At first no alarm was felt by the mother and daughter, but towards the afternoon, Mrs. Wallis deemed it a matter of prudence to despatch a messenger for Doctor Small of Longford—a man reported to be exceedingly clever.

The doctor's name and nature were *not* alike. Though small by name, he was fat by nature, and, in addition, was rather pompous and dogmatic, generally conceiving that when his opinion had been given, nobody else's need be advanced; and if he did descend to hold an argument upon the merits of a case, it was only that he might thoroughly and completely defeat his opponent—if he could. If he could not, he managed to retreat from the field, expeditiously, prudently, and ingeniously; soldier-like, if he had to turn tail, he did so with flying colours, and drums beating, very properly determining that if he must retreat, he would try and make his ignominious retrograde movement look as much like a victory, as was possible under the circumstances.

These then were the characteristics of the gentleman called in to undertake the care of Mr. Wallis during his illness, which was fast becoming a serious matter.

On entering the building, Doctor Small saluted the family in his usual off-hand way, and then directed his attention to the patient. Alfred who had just returned from the factory, anxiously watched the movements of the Doctor, and more especially sought knowledge of his father's real position, and the probable time of his recovery.

"I can do nothing more just now than ask you to attend to my directions, which if followed, I have no doubt will bring about a speedy restoration to health."

"You have but to *give* those directions, Doctor. They will be implicitly obeyed."

"Let the patient have perfect quiet; above all, do not refer to the matter which has so evidently excited him, whatever that matter may be. Also, every four

hours, you will see that he has a glass of good port wine."

" May I ask if the wine is absolutely necessary ? " said Alfred.

" Necessary ! " sharply retorted Doctor Small. Have I not said it is ? "

" Certainly. Still, according to report, such prescriptions, (or at least, their efficacy) are open to doubt, Doctor ! "

" Are they ? Perhaps you know more about your father's health than I do ; if so, I recommend you to prescribe for him sir ; prescribe for him ! "

" I do not pretend to have the knowledge you must have accumulated in your long years of practice. Yet when such men as Dr. Carpenter, Professor Miller, and others of even higher standing, tell us that neither in health nor in disease (except in two or three very unusual cases) is it necessary, one begins to open their eyes."

" I suppose I have had mine shut then, eh ? These men you talk of were—were—well, well ; I could say a good deal, if I choose ! "

" Better say it, Doctor ! I hold that prescribing alcoholic liquors is in most instances a mistake, and generally used only because it is the most palateable remedy, if remedy you can call it."

" Mrs. Wallis, am I doctor here, or is your son ? Please say which ? "

" Why I think you need not be told, sir. Alfred, my love, had you not better retire ? "

" Pardon me a moment mother. Doctor ! does not wine act as a stimulant ? "

" I suppose it does. What the d——l are you driving at now, I wonder ? "

" And you will allow that it easily produces excitement ? "

" Why any fool knows that, I opine."

" Bear with me till I ask another question. Would the right way to quench a fire be to add oil to the burning embers ? "

" Well, sir, civility compels me to answer you. An ass could do it in this case. No ! "

" You say my father is in, or close upon the verge of a fever, yet you prescribe a dose of " excitement-producing " medicine for him, to take every four hours. This is scarcely consistent I think, is it sir ? "

"We are not all pump-patronizers, like you sir, nor are our views upon such subjects so narrow. If you do not intend following my directions, I wash my hands of all responsibility respecting your father."

"You have not answered my question, Doctor, except by appealing to our sympathies, and our trust in you. I leave mother to act as she thinks fit, now."

"When young men who are ignorant of what they are saying, use physiological cudgels against those who have spent their time in the study of the human frame, it only shews that they aspire to more than they have brains to carry out. You will follow my directions, madam, and I have the honour to wish you a very good morning!"

"Alfred, my dear, you should really mind what you are saying. It is a wonder the doctor did not refuse to have anything more to do with your father as a patient.

Perhaps the loss would not have been great. Mother, mark my words. I believe Doctor Small is acting wrongly with my father. Still, you have no alternative than to put his opinion against mine, and, of course, I am aware that Mr. Small's will be deemed most reliable."

"We *must* follow the man's prescription. If any thing worse befell your father, and we were to neglect following the doctor's advice, should we ever forgive ourselves?"

"That is true," thought Alfred. But however he might agree with this conclusion, he felt certain in his own mind that Doctor Small patronised gin rather extensively himself, and had done so before paying the visit he had just brought to a close. Once or twice he had heard of the Doctor's failing. On one occasion he was unsuccessful in a delicate operation, his hand trembled, and the cause was well known. Again, he had been called to the bedside of a dying woman, but was not in a fit condition to leave his house, and the patient died without the comfort and ease he might, perhaps, have afforded her. It was not to be wondered at, therefore, that skilful though Doctor Small usually was, Alfred doubted him.

The prescription was faithfully followed, but for several days Mr. Wallis approached no nearer recovery. His appearance was haggard and wild; occasionally his eye would be fixed upon vacancy, as if working out some problem yet unsolved.

One morning, before Alfred's time of leaving for the factory (which had been now, for more than a week, entirely under his guidance and management), a message was brought to him that his father desired his presence.

On entering the bedroom, he found his father apparently quite calm.

"Alfred! I wish you—to—to discharge that fellow, Hargreaves. Give him a month's wages in advance, and send him about his business."

"That I would have done long since, but I was unaware whether it would be acting against your wishes, or not."

"No! no! Send him away; send him away. And—Alfred, you have always been steady and a good son, I therefore place the factory in your hands. If I recover, which I feel is by no means certain, I shall not interfere with it. If I—"

"No! no! no! Do not say that, father. I'm sure it is very unlikely. Please do not mention the subject again."

"Well, *you* love me, I know, so I will spare you any pain. As I said, the factory will now be yours, and may grow, if you continue to be as energetic, persevering and industrious as you have hitherto been. Make any changes you see fit, and I will instruct Lawyer Close as to other matters."

"Oh! Father, how am I to thank you for this proof of confidence? I know not."

"I might say, by never letting it be misplaced. But this is unnecessary."

Before three days more had elapsed, the following announcement appeared upon the doors of the factory, and, of course was read by the workpeople.

NOTICE !

I wish to inform all those who have hitherto worked in my factory, that I have now resigned the management to my son Alfred, who will hereafter conduct the establishment as he chooses, seeing that I have now given up all part or lot in the concern.

These notices were signed by Mr. Wallis, and appended to the notice was another, running to the following effect:—

NEW ARRANGEMENTS.

On and after the date hereof, I give notice that no intoxicating liquors of any description, either ale, porter, or spirits, will be allowed to enter this establishment; and any workman breaking this rule will be fined five shillings for the first offence, and, on a repetition of the same, will be dismissed from his employment.

Further, any and every man in my service, who will sign the Temperance Pledge, shall receive one shilling per week in addition to his usual wages.

This, as will be guessed, bore Alfred's signature.

Sam Hargreaves regarded these changes in the establishment as anything but conducive to his interests. Since that memorable disclosure, he had felt rather uncomfortable; he was an informer, and was looked upon as such by his fellow workmen; while he was fully aware that the Wallis family must view him with hatred and disgust. The porter had conceived a deadly enmity against Wilson, it is almost unnecessary to say, and had poor Bob Rollinson come across his path, the idiot would most assuredly have been in great danger.

On the Saturday following Alfred's conversation with his father, Sam Hargreaves came to the counting-house for his weekly wages.

"Hargreaves, I am sorry that it is necessary to dismiss you from my employment. Here is a month's wages in addition to those now due to you."

The countenance of the porter would have been a study for a painter, exhibiting, as it did, the perfect embodiment of the passions—hatred and revenge.

"Ugh! You needn't be sorry. I ain't. I've expected it!"

"Then it will be all the more easy to bear. I don't wish to part angrily with you, and I may just add that it is at my father's desire that I part with you."

"Indeed! That's the old gentleman's way of thanking me for the information I gave him." Hargreaves was vexed that he had lost all prospect of making money by that information, seeing that it was all "out;" and he who would otherwise have paid for the secret being kept, had now left the locality.

"I think you were well paid. Much better than most informers," said Alfred. "Come, I have settled with you, pass on, and make room for your companions."

"Well, I'll give you a little more trouble yet, on my account, young fellow."

"No insolence, sir. Leave the building, if you do not wish me to call your companions to *put* you out."

This was a prospect of ignominy which frightened even Sam Hargreaves, who forthwith slunk out, not forgetting to curse those who had befriended him and his wife, and at whose hands he had never received anything but favours, until his own conduct caused his dismissal.

After he left the building, several workmen came up to their master, whose "new-fangled" notions they liked not, and had determined upon a mild remonstrance with him, to what purpose and with what success, will soon be shewn.

The foreman-speaker was a great muscular son of Titan, whose duty it was to superintend and feed with iron, red-hot from the furnace, a Naysmith's steam hammer. To perform this herculean labour, the strongest man, and the one most calculated to sustain long fatigue was always selected.

"Beg pardon, sir; but me and some of my mates wants to know if you means carrying out that there notice about drink?"

"Certainly I do, Jackson. Why do you ask?"

"'Cos I can't stand my work without some beer. 'Taint possable. There's ne'er a one can stand such work as mine wi'out somethin' to keep 'un up."

"Have you tried it? Come, now, answer truthfully."

"No, I ain't. But then I knows well enough. Ther' ain't a soul alive as could sweat all day long, as I do, and nobbut drink cowd water."

"Yours is all conjecture. Now, I'll tell you what, Jackson. I don't want to be harsh with you, but I assure you that several men, engaged in the Newcastle factories, do similar work to yours, and are teetotalers. I can have one of them, any day. But I do not want to part with you."

"Thank'ee, sir. But it's very hard, I think. Don't see what good it can do you, or else I shouldn't say a word about it."

"A great deal; only, you look upon the surface of things, whilst I search deeper. It will do both yourself and me good. You shall all try it three months, and then tell me the result. Do this to oblige me, and I promise you that in the end you will gain much in flesh and lose nothing in pocket."

"Well, sir, as it's t'blige you, I'll try. I'll do my best. But I doan't think I shall be able to stand it. I don't, indeed!"

And so those who were inclined to be discontented received their wages, and had to abide by this decision; the majority of whom thought that if Jackson could stand it, they certainly need not grumble.

Among those who approved of the alterations was Wilson, who, when he received his salary, said:—

"Mr. Alfred, you've begun right. You've done the best thing you could for 'em all. God help us, we've had enough lessons taught by drink, I think."

And the honest man wiped his eye in which moisture rapidly gathered, as he thought of the banished one whom he had striven to save.

Andrew Dean was not slow to express his approval, for though he had once been more intimate with Geoffrey than Alfred, the wheel had changed now, and he assiduously cultivated the acquaintance of Alfred. Weeks rolled on, and, in course of time, Andrew was occasionally invited to Rose Cottage. He deserved the honour, for he had struggled manfully against his appetite for drink. It is easy to say that he conquered that appetite, but difficult to record the battles he fought against his desire for that which had wrought him so irreparable an injury. In a short time he was employed upon one of the two journals published in Longford; but not upon that presided over by the editor whose speech was so much contradicted by his acts; so that Andrew and he were likely to form another striking illustration of Practice and Theory.

Some of Andrew's compositions had already appeared in the way of leaders; marked by strong common sense, good logic, and a complete knowledge of the subject handled, these leading articles were soon selected out as something different to the general run of compositions emanating from the pens of Longford editors.

So that he began to be looked up to, and admission to the homes of respectable people was easily obtained. But Andrew cared for none, so much as for the Wallis family. His history seemed in some part, to have been mixed up with theirs; it had been undeniably so with one member of the family, whose name was now seldom mentioned, certainly only to be the more remembered.

Besides, if truth must be told, the company of little Jenny was attractive to Andrew; little, did we say? She was now fast shooting up into womanhood, and began to develop graces and virtues, which, exclusive of her personal attractions, would fascinate many men. Mr. Wallis, however, did not progress towards recovery, which indeed, seemed more distant than ever, whilst Dr. Small's prescription did not give even temporary relief. Alfred once or twice hinted that he ought to

change his course of action. But he met with such a gruff rebuff, and was so severely rebuked by his mother, that he resolved to mention the subject no more.

The lawyer, our old friend Close, had visited Mr. Wallis. They had been closeted together for some hours, and it was noticed that the man of law was unusually gracious to Alfred; in point of fact advancing a little more civility than was absolutely requisite, for the present.

But it was evident that Mr. Wallis sunk rapidly. In his sleep, which was fitful and disturbed, he could be heard muttering strange and unintelligible things. Sometimes he uttered the name of Geoffrey, and then heaved a deep sigh, which seemed almost to choke him. Night after night he suffered this excruciating mental agony, and awoke in the morning, weary and dispirited, the clothes around him wet with perspiration which streamed from his body during the night.

"We must increase the quantity of port," said the doctor, one morning.

"Doctor! I have determined to take no more! It has done me no good. It has ruined my son, and caused him to be what he is—an outcast from his own home. Shall I, therefore, take this enemy of my peace by the hand, and strain to my bosom the serpent which has stung me? No! no! I have been undecided enough; would to God that I had had more strength of mind years ago, when the habits of my boys were being formed." Mr. Wallis spoke almost in a whisper, so weak was he.

"Pooh! pooh! This is all stuff and nonsense. You must take the wine!"

"Doctor! I am dying, I know I am; not all the wine in the world will save me. Therefore, I refuse to take it, most distinctly."

"Very well, sir, so be it." The doctor took up his hat and left the sick-room.

"Now, call Alfred," said Mr. Wallis. "I wish to speak with him alone."

Alfred came. He had a presentiment of his father's condition.

"Alfred! you know that I am dying. Nay, do not interrupt me. I have made complete arrangements for your future life. I leave you the bulk of my

property. I wish to express to you my approval of what you have done at the factory. But above all, I wish you to make me a promise; that you will eventually seek out your fallen — ”

The sick man had to pause and recover strength before he could continue.

“ Your fallen brother, and attempt to save him. I know he will not stop where he has begun, unless some strong hand stay his career. I feel now, when the prospect of death is near, that I have punished him too heavily. God forgive me—I may have helped to increase his crime. Now, Alfred, promise me.”

“ Dear, dear father, I do, most willingly and sincerely.” Alfred’s utterance was choked with tears, and he passionately kissed the thin, attenuated hand of his father.

That night Mr. Wallis breathed his last!

Who shall describe the grief of that little family, when the head of it was taken from them? One blow had scarcely fallen, before another, yet more heavy, had to be borne. For there, in the chamber of death, lay him whose voice, so familiar, was now hushed, or only spoke by the eloquence of silence.

Alfred saw that he must assume some shew of courage under their affliction, though he knew, too well, how little he felt it.

As for Jenny and Mrs. Wallis, words cannot paint their distress. During the whole of that night and for many afterwards, they were distracted; but gradually the sublime consolations of Holy Writ soothed them, and if they did not restore the dead, they helped them to bear their trouble with fortitude and resignation.

* * * * *

Time rolled on, and softened the grief of the Wallis family. With all his faults, the father had been dearly loved, and was mourned proportionately. But time heals even the deepest wounds, if not completely, at least partially. The remark and fancy of a German “ dreamer ” whom we have met with, might here be appropriately quoted.

“ Ah! how soon we are forgotten,” said he. “ I dreamt one night that I was dead, and my spirit visited its earthly home again, after a lapse of time. The arm-chair was filled again, my place was occupied; I was remembered, and yet in one sense was forgotten. Friends of my youth and manhood ceased to bestow a

thought upon their companion of the past; the waves of life rolled over the spot where I once was, and save a few little bubbles, nothing remained but an unruffled surface, to testify where I had been. Wife and children sometimes thought of me, but the next instant a trivial thought would banish the more sublime one, which was the parent of a sweet communion with *memory* and the *shades of the past*."

The machinery at Rose Cottage was disorganized for a time; but gradually the shadow which had settled upon the home was removed, and faces began to wear their wonted cheerfulness.

Alfred's plan at the factory produced much dissatisfaction. Such an innovation, such an attempt to tryannise over the workmen, such fighting against his own interests and the amount of work he would get done, was utterly absurd. Such was the workman's argument. It was a hard matter for he who had been accustomed to a pitcher by the side of his lathe, to find that it was now in *reality* to be a pitcher only, with no contents except water; it was just as hard for the man who toiled and sweated from early dawn to six at night, to find that intoxicating "refreshments" were sternly prohibited.

Now for the master's side. Formerly he had been accustomed to find that some of his workmen spent a sixth of the day in consuming these so-called refreshments, and that after this operation had been performed, the liquor, far from making them more willing to get on with their work, caused them to feel an unnatural lassitude, and, after two or three hours, a desire for more of this stimulating beverage.

But now, no interruptions to the work occurred, and every man was to be found at his post, apparently none the worse for the interdict.

Some fifty workmen voluntarily came forward and signed the pledge, after making a trial of the system for three weeks. They were asked their reasons for adopting the pledge so soon after the commencement of the new arrangement.

"We find that we do not require it, and that we can do very well without it. We save money, and lose nothing, while we feel none the worse for the change."

Such was the substance of the answer given to Alfred.

But it was not all victory. About a hundred of the

workmen proved very obstinate. They regarded Alfred as a decided tyrant, who wanted to take away their "privileges" from them. Sam Hargreaves was not slow to fan the flame, and in the course of a few days from the time the fifty became teetotal, a paper was handed into the counting-house, conveying the news that if the new law was not repealed, the hundred men who signed that paper would "turn out."

Alfred simply said they were at liberty to do so.

But they never did. Fortunately, common-sense overcame their desire to have their own way, and they accordingly had to beat an ignominious retreat from their declaration.

Three months elapsed before Alfred made a general proposal that all his men should sign the pledge.

Previous to this, many old offenders, and indeed some of the ringleaders of the opposition, had fallen in with the new law and were astonished at their powers of endurance without intoxicating liquors.*

The general proposal to sign was laughed at for a time. But the fifty who had signed determined on holding a meeting, inviting to it all their fellow-workmen. Alfred was there, and was called upon to take the chair.

After several rough but hearty speeches from the teetotal workmen, Alfred rose and said:—

"Now, my men, do not misunderstand me. This movement is made as much for your good as mine. If you all sign the pledge to-night, I can safely say that not one of you will repent it this day twelvemonths. That is, none but the tippler, and I ask all of you if there is one who would like to be branded with that name? (Cries of no!) I have heard some say that my father never would have done what I have done. To such I may say, that almost his last dying words were to the effect that I had done right. If you sign, let me say that none of you will ever have cause to regret

* Take a case in point. On September 1st, 1863, I visited a large glass-house in Birmingham in company with a friend. Those who have been to such places, are, of course, aware that the heat is most intense. The workmen are always in a state of half-nudity, for they have to face the furnaces glaring out upon them at a white heat. I observed that all the workmen, save one, were in a fearful state of perspiration. It trickled down their bodies in narrow streams, and stood upon their foreheads in huge drops. But the exception was perfectly free from all this, and handled the fused glass with a coolness and dexterity which astonished me. I enquired of him how it was. "The secret is, sir, that I am a teetotaler and have been many years. I can stand twice as much fatigue as any of the rest, and with more ease. There is not a man in the place, besides me, who does n't drink something intoxicating during the day."

it, and I shall not be otherwise than I have been, to those who won't sign."

Three cheers were given for Alfred. After all, he was a favourite. They had found him to be a good and considerate master, always granting a reasonable request, and never refusing to redress a grievance. At the conclusion of the meeting, the whole of the hands, with three exceptions, came forward, and on that memorable night, signed the pledge.

These three exceptions were Harrison, Freeman and Taylor.

We have a few pages to devote to an episode in the life of one of these recusants. It is a sort of bye-play which the reader can skip, and begin at chapter nine if he chooses; but it is necessary in our history as illustrating another phase of the Temperance question. It is a view, against which the prudish would close their eyes, and the over-sensitive shut their ears. But the duty of the honest physician is to probe the sore to its depth, and, by judicious treatment, do something towards effecting a cure. It is a story we should scarcely care to tell our sister or mother, yet is one which they ought to know. It is a tale which would be scouted from the drawing-room, and yet should be listened to by everyone. It is a thrilling romance, and yet is enacted far too often in actual life.

After this, the reader is at liberty to adopt our suggestion if he choose; but for truth's sake, we would rather he would follow us in our narrative.

Of those three men who refused to sign the pledge, we know something. Taylor has figured conspicuously in our pages. So has Freeman, not so notably perhaps, still, sufficiently so for him to remain in the reader's recollection.

Harrison was with the company on the night when Taylor struck down his child. He (Harrison) was a man of about forty, was dependant entirely upon his weekly wages for the support of himself, wife and daughter, a girl of eighteen, good-natured, affectionate, and not without a share of personal attractions.

Brought up entirely at home, she had acquired home-habits, amongst which was the taking of a little ale several times during the day.

We are apt in most cases to look upon this habit as unimportant. But if the world's acts could only be unveiled, if every result could be traced to its source,

and every consequence to its cause, we should banish the wine-cup for ever, and the reign of alcohol, no matter in what form, would be over.

Harrison and his wife were almost as bad as Taylor in their love for drink. It had become a regular appetite, an overpowering desire; and the idea of signing the pledge was looked upon as a farce, alike by man and wife.

Freeman was a young man, and had for some time been smitten with Annie Harrison. Nearly a year had he been an accepted lover.

They walked and talked, and breathed those vows of love which are so readily accepted for what they seem—truthful sincerity. He professed such affection as had never before been felt for woman by man, and she believed him. He swore everlasting fidelity, and she credited him only too eagerly.

One evening, before proceeding on their usual walk, he took her to the bar at Sam Hargreave's Inn—"The Honest Man."

Sam had determined to oppose Alfred's reformation in more ways than one. He welcomed Freeman, and invited him to drink with considerable promptitude.

He and his companion had more than one glass, and then set out for a stroll.

But he was only the tempter under the guise of an angel. And this, in our opinion, is the worst sort of villainy. We have more respect for the man who makes villainy his profession, than for he who presents a white face whilst he possesses a black heart.

Freeman seemed more affectionate on this night than on any other. His warm breath fell upon the rosy cheeks of Annie Harrison, and she felt that she trusted and loved him with unbounded confidence. His hot lips were pressed to hers, and she was not slow to show him that she loved him quite as intensely.

Some words, however, fell from his lips which caused the pure girl to shrink within herself; her rosy cheeks were blanched, and she trembled in every limb.

But he spoke again, and his smooth sophistry reassured her.

Her head was fired, and she would have fallen, had not Freeman caught her.

The one she loved and trusted was still tempting her!
It is a dangerous thing to

"Stand parleying outside of pleasure's door."

But Annie Harrison was doing this. True, she was scarcely herself. The liquor of Sam Hargreaves had excited her, and her ideas were confused.

But the devil has a wonderful variety of arguments at his command, and before that young girl left her lover, she was ruined irretrievably.

And yet she clung to him, for she had sacrificed all for his sake. She knew, now, that all would scout her, she would be a bye-word and a reproach to decent people. But what cared she? Freeman had promised to be faithful to her, had sworn to marry her. She *dared* not doubt that he would keep his promise.

So far, this is a common incident. The same play has been represented a hundred times. Many a cheerless home knows this to its cost. Many a mother would rather have followed her child to the grave than have proved the fact.

The young girl had left home, pure and spotless; she returned, sullied and dishonoured; conscious of degradation, and yet dreading lest her fall should be discovered.

The man whom she had loved better than her own honour, was now the constant subject of her thoughts. Every vision of the future depended upon him, as its chief support; but if he were withdrawn from her, all would be darkness and despair.

She little knew how foolish it was to risk a whole future for the passion of the moment; or how foolish it was to barter security and peacefulness, for insecurity and unhappy forebodings. Poor Annie! Sinful only in loving too well—what is in store for thee?

Weeks passed on, and Freeman constantly assured her that he was making definite arrangements for their marriage. Weeks merged into months, and even yet he delayed. Annie was naturally urgent; but this hurry served as a pretext for quarrelling with her he had so solemnly promised to wed, and on one of these occasions he told her that she must either wait his time, or give him up altogether.

“Surely George, this is not what I ought to expect from you? Your own child will soon be given to the world, and would you brand it as an illegitimate, and me as a disgraced woman, when you promised before God, to marry me?”

She burst into a flood of tears! Once, she never thought such an appeal would be necessary, but she

now saw that she was chasing a mirage, and that to depend upon the promises of a man who has lost all respect for the one he loved is worse than foolishness, it is absolute madness—a vision scarcely ever realized.

She had much need to be urgent; but Freeman seemed to become more and more indifferent. Soon, the girl's situation could be concealed from none, and the discovery resulted in banishment from her home. She was told to find an asylum with her seducer, to follow the fortunes of him to whom she had sacrificed a woman's most valuable gem—her virtue.

They were harsh words, and cut deeply to the heart of Annie Harrison. But how was it possible that her parents could judge of the temptation to which she had been subjected? They could not understand her loving trustfulness, her faith in him she loved. They looked upon the fall from a cooler point of view, and judged accordingly.

The story need not be prolonged; we shall have to take up the thread again at a later portion of our narrative. Suffice it then, that with scarcely a place in which to lay her head, homeless and friendless, deserted by the villain who had ruined her for the time present, and that which is to come, Annie Harrison turned toward the great metropolis, hoping there to earn some sort of subsistence for herself and little one.

Everyone thinks that London contains bread for all. So it may; but how hardly some must win it, let those testify who have had to struggle on with poverty and no-reputation as their companions. The passenger through the streets sees that they teem with life and wealth. His gaze rests upon fashion robed in its gorgeous dresses; upon beauty unruffled by cares, unwrinkled by troubles; upon the modern Croesus, rolling in wealth, yet eager for more; upon gigantic plate-glass-windows, the frame-work of valuable property, displayed as if in mockery of the moneyless man, who looks upon the set-out as he might upon a vision—never to realize it. This is one side; but let the same philosopher pass out of the busy street, down some of those narrow lanes, teeming with uncared filth, redolent with noxious odours; there let him study the other side of human nature. Let him note the needlewoman (of whom Annie Harrison was one) making a shirt for threepence, and other articles in

proportion ; let him look at the man who eagerly ransacks the dirt-heaps to see if he can make anything of its contents ; let him pull down the house-fronts and see a score of men and women huddled together in one sleeping-room for the sake of economy, or contemplate their various ways of earning sixpence. Still worse, let him ponder upon the difficulty of being virtuous, when honesty is so meagerly paid and vice is so well-rewarded, *for the time being*. Let him think how narrow a line it is which separates the good from the bad, the thief from the honest man, the girl of the streets from the pure in mind. Poverty often converts to wickedness, quite as much as the heart, and that which is attributed to a depraved mind, is as often the result of dire necessity. Hunger is the parent of a thousand vices.

Poor Annie Harrison was one of those who had to struggle in this way. Night after night she would sit stitching, and thinking how hard it was "that bread should be so dear," and how much labour it took to earn a shilling. Old habits soon came upon her again, and she took to drinking, her utter inability to pay for much drink being an incentive to drown reflection. Soon she found a new way of making money. Her beauty became marketable, and she could now earn as much in one night, as she formerly gained in a month. But in what way ? Ah ! let desolated homes and heart-broken mothers testify. Let those who have known the bitterness of having such a daughter, answer the question. Let the hospitals give their testimony ; let shamed humanity speak ; let our blazè young men come forth and acknowledge their share in the desolating work. Let those monsters in human form, who drive their victims into this penfold of shame and damnation, stand forth and acknowledge their handiwork. Annie Harrison was once good and virtuous, but one false step had plunged her into a whirlpool of vice and sin. There was no hope for her, unless, like the thief upon the cross, she turned at the eleventh hour—she would otherwise be drawn into the vortex, and eternally lost.

It is a fearful picture, but true in a thousand instances. The victims could not carry on this life of complete isolation from the good and the pure, without something to bury reflection. Retrospection is the worst punishment you can give them, so they

fly to drink to keep them on in their vile trade ; to make them fearlessly tread the broad way, knowing they are on it, and have lost sight of the safe and narrow road.

And as to the victimizer, society allows him to walk at large, unmolested, and, in many cases, unreproached, The blame attaches to the tempted, not the tempter, a state of things scarcely compatible with justice. We do not hang the murdered, but the murderer; we do not imprison the man who has been purloined, but the thief. Why then should the seducer escape scatheless, while his victim suffers contempt of the most bitter kind from all humanity, and from none more especially than her own sex, who should extend the Samaritan-hand to their wounded sister, restore her place in society, and give her a chance of redeeming her lost honour.

We wish to impress one fact upon the reader; drink is a main supporter of the social evil; it has been proven beyond contradiction; it is a common thing to hear these lost girls say, "We could n't go on if we did n't have some drink. Here then is a weapon which may be used against the evil; here then is something which, by its absence, may materially help to diminish the public vice. Here is food for sound legislative reflection.

Annie Harrison was one of the victims, and finally became one of those girls. Sometimes in sober moments, a thought of the happy "times gone bye" would float through her mind; but it was painful by contrast with her present position, and she soon banished all such reflections, wrongly thinking that retreat was impossible, and progression a dire necessity. Her little one had been released, happily too, let us say; yet its depraved mother wept as sincerely and as lovingly over it, as the most virtuous mother would do over her favourite child. But the little coffin had not been a day in its narrow resting-place, ere the mother might be found at the gin-shop, quenching the thought that she was now entirely alone in the world; cast out, unloved and unloving.

CHAPTER IX.

“Tis midnight ; London labour sleeps,
Yet London pleasures still are rife ;
An angel o'er night's records weeps ;
For Death stands waiting, e'en in life.

“Take care ! beware ! keep from the cup !
It stings you ere you drink it up :
‘T is poison—full, and charged with ill ;
It has proved hurtful—is so still.”

LET us return to Geoffrey Wallis and his young wife. At the period when we again open our tale, five years had elapsed since their marriage. And how many incidents and changes had taken place in that short space of time ? It is to these we would now draw the reader's attention.

Geoffrey's first care, after establishing his wife and himself as comfortably as his means would allow, was to look out for some sort of occupation. For weeks and months he tried in several ways, but could not succeed. He advertised, but nobody answered. He replied to advertisements, but nobody took much notice of his application, save one liberal gentlemen, who proposed that Geoffrey should be at his service from six a.m. to ten p.m., for the modest sum of twenty pounds a year.

He began to see that all the talents for which he had been so praised, and by which he had set so much store, were of little avail in getting him employment. Things did not look bright, and we must not forget that Geoffrey spent money in what was not absolutely necessary, namely, in occasional potations, anent which he had several conversations with Jessie, who tried hard to influence him in favour of teetotalism. One evening, it was palpable that he had been indulging more than ordinary.

“Geoffrey, love, have n't you been having something more to drink ?”

“Why, yes ; there's no denying it. But, then, what's a fellow to do ? Can't get any employment, and I *must* have a little pleasure to keep off the blues.”

“Can't you come to me to solace you, love ? I'm sure no one cares for you in the tap-room, whereas, I would gladly die for you, if it were necessary.”

“I know you would, pet ;” and Geoffrey put his arm round his wife's waist. He was yet a lover, but

had not a nature capable of *remaining* so under dictation.

"Well, then, why not come to me in your trouble? Surely your wife has a right to share it with you, as well as better fortune?"

"Of course; but you see, love, a glass or two has nothing to do with loving your wife."

"Not if that wife wishes you to give it up, and is certain that it would be better for you?" said Jessie, looking earnestly at her husband.

"Why, I think it would be unreasonable of her, do n't you?"

"No, Geoffrey, not in your case. Tell me, has drink been a friend to you?"

"I've spent many a pleasant hour over a glass."

"Do n't be angry, love; you have not answered me. Has it ever injured you?"

"Well, I can't say it has n't."

"That is to say, it *has*. Well, all I ask of you is, that you will grant me the greatest favour you ever can do me, that is—sign the pledge. If you do this, I will love you more than ever, if it is possible to do so, and you shall always find me to be a willing and obedient wife, ever active for your comfort."

Jessie was now testing the strength of that power she once was certain she could exercise over her husband; and as she had often thought the matter over, and puzzled herself how to set about using the power, she waited with proportionate eagerness to hear Geoffrey's answer. His face did not portend much success.

"Jessie! Everybody has dinned this subject into my ears. I have had Temperance advocates, my sister, my brother, Andrew Dean, your mother, and a host of others, amongst which I am now to number my wife. Now, Jessie, I wish to treat you kindly, and speak in no other tones than those of affection. But once for all, let me ask you never to touch upon this topic again, for, in doing so, you will make me forget that I am your husband and you are my wife."

"Jessie had burst into tears, yet even then she ventured a reply.

"It is not long since, Geoffrey, that you said it was impossible you could ever care more for your glass than for me. Is it not so, now?

"Do n't be stupid; how can the glass ever affect my love for you?"

"We shall see," said Jessie. It was a prophecy.

So was that of Mrs. Ryle; and Jessie thought of it that night, when Geoffrey was out, she knew not where. She remembered her mother saying, "If you wait till you are a wife to try the experiment, (of reforming Geoffrey,) you may find the undertaking more difficult of performance than you think." And another, "I would never marry a man who could not command himself. He will fail to secure your respect."

These words rang in the ears of the young wife. It was not a long time since she had heard them, but they were not likely to be soon forgotten. As she sat alone in her little room, waiting her husband's return, her thoughts were of home; the form of her mother rose up constantly in her own mind, and to get rid of these thoughts, which were at once pleasant and painful, she took up the "Times" newspaper.

It was a mere accident, but a strange one, that her eye should fall upon the following advertisement in the second column of that newspaper.

"To J-R—or J-W. You are earnestly requested to write to your mother, who has been almost heart-broken. You can at least assure her of your safety, and of your innocence, if that be necessary."—
I. Wyndham.

The poor old gardener had inserted this unknown to his old mistress, and the last sentence of it caused the blood to rush to the cheeks of Jessie. The imputation it contained was cruel, she thought, forgetting under what circumstances she left Mossgrove. She was not an instant in determining to write to her old home, and with a trembling hand her pen was soon at work.

"My own dear mother: how shall a daughter, who has caused you so much pain and uneasiness, venture to address you? If you knew all the circumstances, I scarcely think you would blame me so much as I feel you will have done. But let me hasten to assure you that I am lawfully the wife of Geoffrey Wallis. We were married before the Rev—, at—, of which I hold the legal proof. I felt acutely the leaving you; but except in this act of disobedience, or rather leaving home without your consent, I have not erred. I am still your own Jessie, and am worthy to be called your daughter. Geoffrey is kind to me; but I feel that if I had mother to rely upon for advice, I should be happier in every way. My husband is endeavouring

to procure a situation here, and if he is steady and persevering, both of which I hope he will be, I have little doubt but that we shall lead a very happy and comfortable life. Again, mother, forgive me for the pain I have caused you, and believe me to remain, your ever-affectionate daughter, JESSIE WALLIS.

She folded up the little note, but her hand trembled as she wrote the old familiar superscription.

"Mrs. Ryle, Moss Grove, near S——, Northamptonshire."

A few days elapsed, and the following answer arrived. It was scarcely like her mother's handwriting, whilst the sheet had evidently been scalded with tears, falling upon the undried ink, and staining the paper. It ran thus.

" You are no daughter of mine. Having preferred following the fortunes of an unsteady young man, in whom you evidently have not much confidence, to obeying the wishes and acting upon the advice of your mother, you must abide by your choice, and never return to me except you are homeless, then indeed, I might give you shelter, but should never be able to look upon you as the same daughter whom I lost." —

JANE RYLE.

Jessie's head fell upon the table, and for several minutes she was insensible. But she recovered and kissed the letter which condemned her. " There is always a home for me, after all " said Jessie, but God grant that I may never want any other than that provided for me by Geoffrey. He may prove unsteady, but I am sure he loves me, and will never suffer me to leave him ; I never will, except he desires it."

Strange thoughts, those, for a wife of six months. Yet for all this, Jessie felt quite confident in her husband, and reposed upon one fact, that she believed he would always have sufficient strength to stop at a certain point, and preserve his self respect.

Geoffrey began to despair of getting a situation, when, as he was passing down Seymour Street to his lodgings, he met with an old friend ; at least, one who had once been so, but was now considered as an enemy.

" Why, Geoffrey Wallis ! How are you, my boy ? "

" I shan't be any the better of your acquaintance, Angus James !

" Come now ! Don't tiff. They forced me to be a witness against you. Sent down a telegram, on purpose with a fiver by way of encouragement. How-

ever, what's your little game, my boy? Where do you hang out?"

" My 'little game' is playing at doing nothing, and I "hang out" just above."

" Come on then, I'll go with you."

" Perhaps you'll wait till you're invited, Mr. James?"

" No use, old boy, no use! I'm not to be insulted, and as I may be a friend to you, suppose we just sink differences for a little while. Forget and forgive?"

" So be it, then. Well, you say you may be of use to me. I'm after a berth, can you help me to one?"

" Could'n't have been more providential, as the spider said wot swallowed a fly. It'll just suit you."

" Yes, I dare say; but what is it?"

" Why, you knew Jack Jenkins and Harry Harland, they have both been in a warehouse in Bishopgate Street, for the last three months. There is another clerk wanted there, and I'll mention your name. I think you'll get the berth."

" Thank you, James." And Geoffrey really did mean what he said. " Perhaps you'll come up and take a snack with us?"

" Us! Who's the other then?"

" Why, my wife; Jessie Ryle that was, you know."

" Oh! Ah! Thank'ee. No; we won't trouble her or put her out of the way. Just let us step into this 'Public,' and talk matters over."

So they did, and several glasses of brandy and water were consumed at the said "talking over," in the course of which James told him that he kept the "Fighting Cock," in Gracechurch Street, where there was a "Free-and-Easy" every Tuesday night—choice fellows—good songs—and by-the-bye, Paddy Dermot joins us too, to-morrow; you *must* come! I shall also be able to tell you about that place."

" Well, I will come. But it is not a late affair?"

" I always cut it as short as the gents will allow me."

And so they parted, Geoffrey feeling that he was again on the verge of the whirlpool, and that it would be necessary to conceal from his wife, the fact that he had met with some of his old Longford companions. One thing she would be pleased to learn, and that was the prospect of his speedily obtaining a situation.

And so it proved; for anything, no matter however trivial which affected Geoffrey, produced a corresponding effect upon her. Her whole life was locked up in

his keeping, and he was well aware that upon him would depend her happiness.

"And who is this kind friend of yours, Geoffrey, love?"

"Oh! you wouldn't know his name if I were to mention it."

"Never mind; I shall be glad to remember him, even though I don't know him?"

"You must excuse me telling you, Jessie."

"Surely that is not kind of you?"

"Well, if you must know, his name is Angus James, and he was a great friend of mine when I——I resided at Rose Cottage."

Jessie's keen mind saw through everything at a glance. At any rate her love for Geoffrey kindled up at the possibility of a renewal of these meetings, which, as they used to be carried out at Longford, she knew were productive of danger to him. Knowing this, she placed her arm upon his shoulder, and with a loving smile, said:—

"Geoffrey! I have a presentiment that you are again running into danger. Forgive me for mentioning it, only remember, my own happiness and yours depends upon your remaining steady." Ere she had finished, the smile faded into a shower of tears.

"Jessie, it is a pity you cannot have more confidence in me."

"Pardon me, love. I will have confidence in you. I trust everything to you; and, indeed, I have no one in whom to trust, save yourself."

Geoffrey was not hard-hearted. He pressed her to his breast, and she felt happy.

On the evening appointed, towards dusk, Geoffrey put on his hat and prepared to leave the house. It had been unusual for him to leave at this hour, and Jessie very naturally asked him whither he was going.

"I am going to see about the situation!"

"Surely not at this hour? All the offices must be closed."

"So they are; but I am to receive information about the place from Angus James."

"Take care of that man, Geoffrey. I have heard he has not been a good genius to you, heretofore, and he can scarcely have altered much in so short a time."

"You trouble yourself with useless fears, love. What object can he have in doing me an injury? He sets about it in a strange way, if he intends doing me harm."

" Well, we shall see ; only be on your guard, and mind ! I shall wait up for you."

" You will have no occasion to do that. I shall be home at an early hour."

So Geoffrey left the house, threaded the labyrinth of streets lying between his lodgings and Gracechurch Street, and arrived at the " Fighting Cock " in due time.

It was a strange looking place. A model of three-fourths of the London gin-shops. The front was highly decorated, green and gold were lavished thereon indiscriminately. Attractive placards about " Kinahan," " Mountain Dew," and " French Brandies " were reared up against a sign, which, had all obstructions been removed, would have told the passenger that " Derby, Deal and Co's. Entire " was sold there. The windows were of plate-glass, and beyond them, at the other side of the apartment, were displayed barrels very brilliantly painted, of Brobdinagian proportions, bearing the inscriptions of " Old Tom," " Treble X," and other titles equally mysterious to the uninitiated. The room was filled up with every modern invention applicable to the publican's trade. Beer engines and their appliances occupied one end, while a place was kept apart for the sale of spirits. There was an entrance for the public who brought pitchers, and another for those who took their potations on the spot. For the accommodation of the latter, hard wooden benches were fitted up, while to make the room look a little cleaner, it was thickly spread with sawdust, which, by night, had been so trodden down and mingled sometimes with mud, and always with spilt beer, that the floor resembled very closely a pig-stye, a resemblance made still more perfect by the smell of stale beer, gin, rum, and other beverages in course of consumption. Under the large plate-glass window, was a little door leading down to a retired skittle-alley, while another door led to the upper regions, in which was professed to be held a " free and easy," otherwise denominated a " harmonic meeting," oftener abounding in discord than harmony. The long room in which this was held, was well lighted, while a fire was burning brightly in the grate. Gas is a great thing in a London establishment for the sale of spirituous liquors. There it has the same effect as in a pantomime, it makes tinsel and dutch-metal look like

gold. What daylight shews to be prosy, commonplace and ordinary, it magically transforms into the very opposite. It makes the place look attractive, and is used indiscriminately. It is merely throwing a sprat to catch a mackerel, when the landlord makes his place cheerful, by way of contrasting it with the desolate home of the man who is fingering his last two-pence, knowingly taking away from his children two more penny loaves.

It was to this place that Geoffrey resorted on the evening in question. At the door leading upstairs, the following placard appeared.

"A free-and-easy or harmonic meeting will be held here to-night. The chair to be occupied by that most comical of men, Paddy Dermot. A pianiste will be in attendance, and all who are fond of a jovial evening are respectfully invited."

The placard did not announce that no teetotaler could gain admittance, and that to spend a "jovial evening," it was necessary to "spend" your money freely.

When our visitor arrived in the room, he was met with loud applause, and the chairman said, "Gentlemen all, allow me to interdewse to you, me respected friend, Mister Wallis, an' altho' he's unknownst to myself, I've been tould that he's a good man, and thrue, can enji a song, and give one himself. This being the case, Mister Wallis is welcome to our company, an' I hope he'll give his arders at wanst."

Landlord James took his place at the foot of the long table, the chairman rapped his hammer, and then announced a song from himself as a beginning. Whilst he is singing it (and although it may be very funny and very Irish, it is of no possible interest to us) let us just glance at the company around.

The man called "Paddy Dermot" was once Colonel of a crack Irish regiment, but was obliged to "retire" (that was the polite way of putting it) because he preferred the whiskey-bottle to his duty, and was oftener to be found in its company, than in the company of his own Company.

Angus James we know. On his right sat Jack Jenkins and Harry Harland, neither of whom seemed to be much improved in personal appearance by their experience of "life," which they confidentially whispered to Geoffrey they had "seen, and no mistake,"

adding that they would do themselves the honour of initiating him into the "mysteries of London." The two seemed to have exhausted the "mysteries," whatever they might be, and these mysteries did not seem to have given them any more colour or health. Both Jack and Harry wore a seedy suit of black, their eyes seemed to have sunk a good deal, and there was a general air of dissipation about them which was not a good argument in favour of "seeing life." They were seeing it, and evidently paying dear for it; and it was only by dint of extraordinary exertion and *appearance* of steadiness that they succeeded in keeping their situations.

Further on sat a tall, bald-headed man, whose name was Rich; a fearful contradiction so far as his means were concerned. He was now in every sense of the word, a beggar. Beggared in health, money, reputation and brains, for he was one of those quiet and confirmed lunatics, who are allowed to go at large. He was admitted to the free-and-easy because he furnished the company with amusement. He was the butt of all their jokes, and if conversation, songs, or recitations flagged, Rich was a never failing source of fun. This man was once the greatest mathematician in Devonshire,* astonishing his country by the depth and profundity of his mind. But the reader gazes upon the wreck of what once was, but now that wreck possesses scarcely the power of mind of an infant.

Opposite him sat a man who had once been a Clergyman. He still wore a piece of dirty white neck-cloth, but his face was unwashed and unshaven, while it burned with the effects of drink. His suit had once been broad-cloth, but had since been mended and patched indefinitely, though even now, many unmendable rents remained. The portion of amusement he contributed was not insignificant. He treated the assembly to a mock sermon, burlesqueing the word of God, and blasphemously calling upon the Most High to aid him in his devilish perversion of Holy Writ.

Let ministers of the Gospel think of this—let those who value it in its purity, its beauty and its precious integrity, ponder upon the fact, that drink can even do this; can bring the human intellect to so low a level that nothing is safe, not even the sublimity and simp-

* This is a fact, as are others which appear in this tale under the garb of fiction.

licity of the Bible. Its promises are here laughed at, its inspired lines are made the subject of coarse and ribald jests, its high morality and standard of excellence wrested from its true meaning, and degraded to the level of the lowest thoughts. Here is food for the divine to ponder over, here is matter for the follower of Christ to dwell upon, for that which can urge a man to laugh at his Maker, is surely no fit thing for a professor of christianity to touch. That which most degrades man is certainly not to be handled by he who indulges in the highest aspirations of which humanity is capable.

These were the most notable amongst the company, the rest were made up of clerks, shop-assistants, young fellows just beginning to "see life," and here and there an old grey-headed man, who had wasted, and did still continue to waste, his time and money at such assemblages as these.

It is not our purpose to go into particulars of the "free-and-easy" that night, our reader has had particulars of the meetings at Longford and elsewhere, and they, we should hope, were sufficiently disgusting as not to require any repetition. The only difference in those "jovial evenings," at the "Fighting Cock" was that you would find more of the "fast" element about them. Keener jokes circulated, and later hours were kept, while the company generally was less select.

The "pianiste" presided at a very poor instrument, although he did not appear to be a bad executant. He was an old man with thin attenuated fingers, and a very careworn look. He seemed like a piece of machinery, obedient to every wish of the chairman. *He* was not comic, very much the opposite; but then he served the landlord's purpose, for his terms were cheap—only a shilling a night, with as much drink as the company would treat him to; and generally speaking they did not allow his glass to remain empty for long together. He took their favours mechanically; did not even thank them: and there was an air of superiority about him, which caused him to be dubbed "the Duke." We have been thus particular about him, because he plays no mean part in our story.

On entering the room, Geoffrey felt very uneasy, for he saw that strong temptations lay before him, and he was painfully conscious of the fact that he had not strength of mind to resist them. But the "don't-care"

feeling soon overpowered him, and two hours after he joined them, he was to be found giving one of his comic recitations, which, as in old times, met with great applause ; this elevated him so much that he rose and gave another, and again the approval of this motley company intoxicated him. He was unconsciously drifting onwards, and glass after glass of the fiery liquid was poured down his throat.

"Geoffrey, my boy, what will the missus say?" said James, to test his resolution.

"Say? Who cares, I suppose I am my own master, am I not?

"Of course you are, as William Tell says :—

"As free as the mountain torrent
Which leaps our hills, and ploughs our valleys,
Without asking leave."

At least he says something like that, I believe."

"Course! Now then Duke, give us the accompaniment to 'Away with melancholy.'

The Duke gave him a look full of pity, and then ran his fingers over the keys. It was plain that he knew more of the present company than they supposed. However, nobody noticed the peculiarity of his looks. He was an object of no importance.

This song over, Harry and Jack engaged Geoffrey in conversation.

"We have heard about your application to Bangem, Slashy and Co."

"Well, and can you tell me what's th'sult?"

"Hasn't James told you? Why you're engaged. One of the "juniors" happens to be acquainted with Longford, and so you're booked."

"Did'n't they ask for any testimonial or character?"

"Why they did, but I told them we knew you well, and as both of us are high in the estimation of the firm, that was sufficient," said Harry.

"Right as a trivet, my pippin," said Jack, "You'll have to stick your person upon one of our three-legs next Monday morning at eight, prompt."

This news partially sobered Geoffrey, who had not taken so much, but that he could see the responsibility of his engagement.

"I ought to be much obliged to you and James. I'm sure I feel—"

"Never mind, old boy! You can pay it back some day. But remember, you and "us twa" are boon companions, now you have come to London."

"Certainly; I should indeed be wanting in gratitude if I couldn't give so cheap a thing as my friendship in return for your kindness."

"Right you are, stamped, sealed, and delivered, complete, even to the dotting of the i's and crossing of the t's, as Bangem says."

"We'll wait till the parson has got through his sermon, and then we'll shew you a little life. Fill up again," said Harry.

"But I don't like that sermonizing. Its—its—scarcely the thing."

"Bless your innocent face, you'll be of a different opinion some day. Everything that's funny is right, and the Parson *can* make a fellow laugh," said Jack.

"Fun is tolerable if harmless, but not if blasphemous, was an idea which floated dimly through the mind of Geoffrey, but he had not courage enough to give it utterance.

After Rich had delivered a mock "blessing" (which he was scarcely capable of doing, since he had to be up held by his neighbour) Harry, Jack, and Geoffrey, rose. All three were "fired" with drink, but more especially Geoffrey; though he had taken a smaller quantity than the others, it acted upon him more quickly. He did not notice that his two companions held a short whispered dialogue with James, or that the "Duke" tried to catch his attention. The latter was not tipsy, though he had drunk freely. He seemed to be accustomed to large and continued potations, and had sunk entirely into "the slough of despond." What he had once been, nobody knew. He had offered himself to James, in answer to a piece of paper which the landlord pasted upon his windows some two years since, headed, "Wanted, a Pianiste."

The Duke, as we have said, tried to catch Geoffrey's attention, for he had heard his name, and, from keeping open his eyes and ears, could easily tell "the situation of affairs." But Geoffrey was pre-occupied, not with his own thoughts, for if he could have exercised them, it would have been dangerous to his peace of mind, seeing that the hour was midnight, he was bent upon he knew not what, and his young, affectionate wife sat waiting, and wishing for his return.

But though he occasionally had a reminder from his conscience, it was soon drowned amidst the noisy demonstrations of the "harmonists."

When they stepped into the street, none of them could walk steadily.

The air was keen, and the night intensely dark, as the trio moved down King William Street, City.

"What's the game to be?" said Jack Jenkins.

"Lets see," said Harry, exercising as much of his thinking faculty as remained.

"Pullan's Supper Rooms, Cider Cellars, Haymarket and then a good lark by way of a finish up in first-rate style."

"I'm your man," said Jack, "Hallo, Geoff! *you* hanging fire?"

"Don't you think—better go home?" Geoffrey spoke huskily, and seemed half ashamed.

"Go home! certainly not. *We* shant, and we can't do without you."

"Oh! well then—course—must, must! On you go!"

And on they went. Not that we intend to open the eyes of those who fortunately still remain uninitiated as to London life. Still, what we dare say, we will.

At no hour of the night is the whole metropolis asleep. Day is night to many, and night is day. Some make their living by the light of the sun; others a fearful one by lamp-light, and by no light at all.

As the trio progressed, they were met by many, and for all they had a word of some sort. Females in gay and flaunty attire addressed them; occasionally a policeman turned to look after them, wondering whether this was not a "case" for his interference; now and then an honest working man rapidly passed onward, and sometimes a little crowd, a motley group, emerged from a side alley or a bye-street. London never sleeps! carriage sounds were less frequent, but occasionally a cab broke the comparative silence, rattled away along the pavement until the noise faded in the distance. As these three young men turned into Saint Paul's Churchyard, the clock struck midnight, and ere its vibrations ceased, they came across a young woman who seemed to be reclining, or sitting, upon a door-step. She was sobbing violently.

"Hi! young woman, you're manufacturing brine pretty freely."

No answer, only a low moan and a sigh.

"Got any spare tin?" said Jack to Harry.

They dropped a half-crown into the lap of the young girl, and passed on.

"This will enable me to be honest for other two days, at least," she said.

Did they know her? No, they passed on and soon forgot her.

It was poor Annie Harrison!

Passing down Ludgate, up Fleet Street and the Strand, they arrived at their destination—Pullan's. Well known, not that we wish to advertise it, except as a place where young men often go to ruin in more ways than one. A place where music charms, and under its influence and that of the drink with which they will supply you, the visitors forget morning has begun, and that a wife or a mother awaits their return; that what is pleasure to them, is comparative death to others. The hours at which this place most prospers is when other amusements are finished. It seems as if a continuous string of temptations had been prepared for the light-headed, so that they might turn day into night, and cheat nature of the rest she demands.

Here the young men wasted an hour of their time, and, for the good of the concern, and to their own detriment, swallowed three more glasses each, after which they sallied out to the Cider Cellars.

To the unsophisticated, a plain narrative of these vaults, would be simply disgusting. No police reports however filthy, no obscene literature, however immoral, can surpass the scenes at the "cellars." Mock trials on most disgusting subjects, with male and female witnesses, are, or were, listened to by an audience who excited themselves meantime by imbibing spirituous liquors. The whole of the proceedings were evidently highly relished by the audience, and the grosser the jokes, the more applause from the listeners. Will any one ever that these scenes could be carried forward without the aid of intoxicating liquors? Will any person calmly tell us that those "Poësies Plastiques," another name for a most disgusting exhibition, a gross violation of public order, and decency, could be witnessed by sons and fathers in their sober senses, without calling forth the blush of virtuous indignation? No, no! Drink creates vices, and vice feeds upon drink. Imagine these three young men, one married to a young, beautiful, innocent confiding wife; fancy them calmly listening to these flagrant violations of decency, and applauding them. But let us not forget

the cause. Geoffrey, at least, had not yet sunk so low as to have approved these things when in his sober senses. The others had gone through a long course of training in vice, and now rejoiced in the extent of their degradation.

We dare not particularize further. In sketching the worst of these metropolitan gin-nurseries, where all that is evil is fanned into life, where *Good* is a stranger, and the all-powerful "Number One" the ruling spirit of the establishments, we must be general. Our narrative may be read where even a breath from these pestiferous dens has never been wafted; but to be forewarned is to be forearmed, and even purity may be strengthened by reading of its antipode.

Geoffrey was not completely drunk, and applauded even the lowest allusions, occasionally adding some remark of his own, calling forth the special commendation of Jenkins and Harland, and what deserved *their* commendation, was scarcely creditable to its author.

At half-past two, the inebriate trio left this den of iniquity. On passing out from the door, poor Annie Harrison, pale as death, thin, attenuated and poverty-stricken, passed them on her way to her humble abode. She cast down her eyes, for the fact of a woman being out at that hour of the night carried its own comment. The young men passed her with a ribald jest. At the sound of Geoffrey's voice, she started.

"Surely I have heard that voice somewhere," she said huskily. "It seems like a remembrance of past days. But no, it cannot be. I must have been mistaken," and she passed down a dark narrow alley, to her very poor abode with a woman whose character was not calculated to reclaim the erring by the force of example.

The young men went onwards toward the Haymarket. Unsteadily—one of them more so than the others. It was Geoffrey Wallis.

"Think—bet-r-go-h'm!" he said very inarticulately.

"Go home be d—d" said Jack Jenkins. Do you think we're bread-and-butter spooneys like you? We mean to go the whole hog, sir:—the whole hog, sir!"

"Course. Now we mean—Hiccup!—to—to—see life," stuttered Harland.

Well, they were steering for it. Life at three in the morning, in the purlieus of the Haymarket. If a sober countryman were suddenly to be put down in this

locality, and at this hour, he would scarcely know whether to think London ever slept or not.

There is a range of brilliantly lighted gin-saloons, whose fronts hide vice and enormity in its worst shape. You see crowds at the drink counters, eager to be served. Here are very flauntily dressed females, laughing and joking as though they were in Rotten Row, conversing with the noblest in the land. There you may perhaps see a girl hang back, as though not yet quite accustomed to these scenes, but she is soon brought forward by the over-officiousness of her vicious chaperone, and drowns reflection in a strong glass from the counter. There is no slumber here, all is activity and commotion, the shop empties, only to throw its gay contents upon the broad pavement, where young lads, gray-haired men, and girls of all ages, continually pass and repass, cut jokes, make their devilish bargains, and fill the air with all manner of strange and unearthly noises. Such was the Haymarket, in the motley crowd of which the three young men mixed. Soon they made for a gin-shop, but as they were going in, a man obstructed their passage, and trying to push by him, he struck Geoffrey a blow over the eye, uttering at the same time a curse, loud and deep.

Geoffrey was too inebriated to return the blow. Otherwise he would have done so; but the two men confronted each other, and he recognized in his assailant, Freeman, the seducer of Annie Harrison.

This man had been taunted and jeered at in S—, until he finally determined to leave the village. Since then, he had picked up a living "anyhow" in the metropolis. The "anyhow" was his own expression, and report said that it meant nothing very creditable to his honesty. However, more of him hereafter. At present let us continue the narrative of this night's follies.

The trio had another glass in the Haymarket Saloon, and then started up one of the quiet streets leading from Oxford-Street, in the midst of which Geoffrey fell down senseless. Harland and Jenkins had no notion of being troubled by taking home their companion, so they quietly left him where he fell, and pursued their journey, wherever that might lead to.

Geoffrey was soon afterwards picked up by a policeman, and forthwith locked up for the night. He lay insensible until the return of daylight.

At ten o'clock, chagrined, ashamed, and humiliated, he was placed before the magistrate. What occurs there, needs no chronicling, even the newspaper reporters grow tired of narrating fines for drunkenness, so manifold are they.

The magistrate very pompously fined him a crown, and admonished him. The next half hour he was busy granting an application for a new licence to open another drinking-saloon for making more drunks for the government to grow rich upon, both as regards excise-duty and fine-money. Surely if it be right to use what the law licences, it is not right to fine a man for using what the government sanctions! Yet such is the case in "Merrie England."

Geoffrey felt almost ashamed. We say "almost." Had he been really ashamed, he would not have sought to palliate or excuse the position in which he found himself, as he did. He would have made this the turning-point of his existence. But it was not to be so.

As he went homewards, the passage through a narrow street was obstructed, and, in the midst of this crowd, he saw a thin attenuated figure, with coat buttoned close up to his neck, showing the absence of both collar, shirt and waistcoat. He was haranguing the crowd which was laughing and cheering mightily. Let us listen to the close of his speech. The main body of it had been a mixture of irreligion and cant.

"Yes, good people, I was once well to do in the world. I was once a minister of the gospel, but I was put out of my pulpit because I dared to do as I like, and had courage enough to defy everybody as to the limit I put upon my taste for a drop to drink. What is a Briton? Eh? A man who can do as he likes. If I like a glass of gin, am I to be kept from it because some fool chooses to say I ought n't to take it? Not I. Give me a glass of neat gin before anything, and you, as free and independent Britons, have a right to take it when, where, and how you like. If anybody 'll stand treat, I 'll take mine hot, as soon as possible."

Geoffrey accidentally looked up. Surely! —

He looked again, scrutinized the features more closely. It was the Reverend Harvey Sleigh, late vicar of S——!!

Here was the man who had instructed him to be

"moderate," but by all means never to sign the pledge ! Here was the vicar who had said "to tell me that respectable individuals should abjure drink because of a few fanatics, is absurd." Would it have been absurd if the reverend gentleman had still retained his pulpit, his position in society, and the esteem of those around him ?

Again let us warn the reader that we are not deluding him, we sketch from life, and it is neither one nor half-a-dozen, which is the limit of instances similar to the above.

What a severe lesson was this for Geoffrey ! As he passed from the street, he saw the fallen man enter the inn at the corner, followed by a train of "roughs."

It dimly flashed across the young man's mind that theory had failed in this case, and an awful consequence had followed. But he never dreamt of applying the lesson to himself. That he would ever sink so low, was even yet, he thought out of the question, even after the pompous reproof so lately administered by the magistrate.

Scarcely four years had elapsed since the degraded man who had so lately addressed the crowd, was in possession of his pulpit. But the secret vice could not be long kept from his congregation, and its increasing power gradually stamped him as a drunkard.

He had been expelled by the Bishop, and was thenceforth an outcast in society, without means, and without that maker of means—a good character.

The incident formed food for reflection as Geoffrey Wallis walked homewards, but gradually it gave way to thoughts of a yet more painful nature. He was approaching that home where his young wife had remained up, awake, with fearfully foreboding thoughts. All the hours of the morning had passed, and no tidings of her husband. Hurriedly, she put on her bonnet and shawl to go seek him. But she had turned back. Instinctively she knew he would be displeased with her, and she returned. Morning saw her pale face at the window, eagerly watching his return. Still he came not, and delay was maddening the usually calm spirit of poor gentle Jessie. The street awoke to life, and London had begun its daily labour. Still he was absent. Breakfast had been sent away from her untouched, and she still, with eyes reddened by weeping, peered through the window, down the street. At last

she saw him. Flying to the door, joy at his safe arrival overcame every other feeling, and she fell fainting into the arms of her husband.

CHAPTER X.

*"I will not chide thee, love,
But rather bid thee note the tears which flow
For this, thy sin."*

*"The night draws on ! and darker still
Grows all creation. Till the first grey dawn
Of light, announces coming morn.
So with human acts ; the darkest one
Doth oftentimes portend a change,
And light dawns in, where all was sable clad."*

WHEN Jessie recovered from her swoon, she looked long and earnestly at her husband, in order to assure herself beyond the possibility of doubt, that he was safe at home, then bursting into tears, she fell upon his neck and kissed him, whilst the hot drops coursed down her cheeks.

"I know I deserve your quiet reproach, darling," commenced Geoffrey, repentantly.

"I will not reproach you Geoffrey. I am too glad to have you here safe and sound, for I began, indeed I did, to fear all manner of things had happened to you. You may smile, love, but I have counted the seconds as they went by, and as each one passed without your return, my heart was almost ready to burst. Dear, dear Geoffrey, where have you been all night ?

"Why I—you see Jessie love—"

"Geoffrey ! Do not prevaricate, do not say anything untrue. Better, far better to tell me at once, that your senses were overpowered last evening, and you were then unwilling to find your way home."

"You seem to be fond of jumping to conclusions."

"I would rather that it were unnecessary. Geoffrey, you are fast treading the road to destruction—nay, bear with me—consider that I alone, in this great world of London, I alone really love you and wish you happiness—but dear husband, unless you stop at once, there is but one ending to all this."

Geoffrey could not have felt repentant very long; already the fit of stubbornness had strong hold upon him, and to be taught by his wife—

Well, many a better man has been instructed in wisdom by a woman. All the first rudiments of wisdom were taught by a woman—his mother.

But Geoffrey Wallis forgot everything for the moment, except that he was being lectured.

"I shall do as I please, and when I wish to run in leading-strings, I shall not ask my wife to guide me." He said this in a very surly tone, and Jessie burst into tears.

"Geoffrey! Do you not know that all my future is to be spent with you, that it is my pleasure as well as my duty to look after your happiness, and that I cannot separate my interests from yours."

"So, so, it appears that your lectures point to "self," your own self as the most interested!"

"Why will you make me more uneasy still, by such undeserved reflections?"

"Well, never mind. Leave me to pursue my own course, for I tell you that I will be the guide of my own actions. To-morrow morning I find employment in the house of Bangem, Slashy and Co., and then I shall turn over a new leaf.

And so the too credulous wife clung to the future, even in the depth of her present misfortunes. It was like a drowning man clutching at a straw, or like a weary traveller pursuing the mirage. But what of that, the faithful woman had done all that a loving heart could prompt, all that affectionate words could suggest, and she awaited the result with a partial resignation; not that her endeavours to turn her husband from his dangerous path would cease, that would never be until he had extinguished every spark of love in her bosom. But she now saw how false had been her calculations, based upon the fact that after marriage, she could change him by the power of her love. The feeling is powerful, none will deny, but there are others which surpass it, and the love of intoxicating stimulants is one of them.

That scene at dear old Mossgrove came back to her recollection, and she remembered the words which now almost appeared prophetic, falling from the lips of an injured mother. "If you wait till you are a wife, to try the experiment of reformation (in Geoffrey), you will find the undertaking more difficult of performance than you think. Ah! *Then*, and *now*. Then, she was sanguine, hopeful, and confident of success; now, forebodings and despair had almost taken possession of her entire thoughts.

But let us pass to the counting-house of Bangem, Slashy and Co., on the Monday morning when Geoffrey Wallis placed his services at their disposal. It was a very bare counting-house, the chief items consisting of unpainted deal desks, dangerously high three-legged stools, green shaded lamps, ponderous ledgers, and other ordinary accompaniments of office work. Geoffrey made his salutations to his old friends, was introduced to the firm, found Mr Bangem very pompous and Mr. Slashy very ferret-eyed and suspecting; the Co., being nobody in particular; this was the end of his observations, unless you include the fact that Mr. Jenkins and Mr. Harland did not seem to occupy very important positions in the "House." We must not however, omit to mention, that to the great surprise of Geoffrey, he found the "Office Boy" was no other than our old friend Bob Rollinson, the idiot, who had obtained the place through the exertions of some half-dozen friends, after the fire from which he was rescued. The only salutation Bob gave Geoffrey was a nod, and a look which might mean anything or nothing, according to the intelligence of the one so favoured.

"Mr. Wallis, you are I find, the son of a man I once knew well. I am glad to shew you that I can repose confidence in you as the son of my old school-fellow. I am sorry you are now deprived of his counsel and support," said Bangem.

"Counsel—support—now deprived? Pray sir, what can you mean. Pray explain."

"Have you then so soon forgotten his death?"

"DEATH!" shouted Geoffrey, but in an instant he remembered that it would not do to betray his ignorance of the event, and with a violent effort he mastered his feelings.

"Ah! I see the mere mention of it, affects you violently. Let that pass. I shall entrust you with the care of our cash book. I believe I need no other recommendation as to your honesty, my good friend, than the fact of your antecedents being all I could wish."

"Cash books again!" muttered Geoffrey. "My antecedents all he could wish! Ah! If he only knew." He then said aloud, "I would most willingly accept a less responsible post."

"No doubt. But this is the one I intend you to fill. Here is the book, here are the keys of the cash box,

and this statement now shews the balance in hand."

With these words, the pompous Mr. Bangem left Geoffrey to his own meditations. They were none of the pleasantest. His father dead ! The question "Who killed him ?" drove the hot blood to his face, and he felt that he might almost be branded as a parricide. All that father's kindness then came to his recollection, and unconsciously for the first time during several years, he cried, not noisily, but quietly, not so much with outward show as with inward emotion.

Mechanically he opened the huge book, and began to make himself acquainted with the mode of book-keeping adopted by Bangem, Slashy and Co. He had not been meditating many moments before Bob Rollinson jogged his elbow.

"A letter for you, Mister Geoffrey. Bob knows a queer chap when he sees him, and if he was'nt a queer one that delivered that letter, why then, Bob has no sense."

Ah ! if Bob had only known *who* delivered that letter, the news might have gone far towards restoring him to his senses. But he did not, and Geoffrey tore open the envelope :—

"One who knows you, who knows your family, and who knows the dangerous company you keep, would advise you to see that you are not ensnared. Beware of your boon companions, who will only love you so long as you serve their ends. I am an old man, and know the world better than you. There are many pit-falls where the ground appears to be most secure. I may seem to speak in riddles. So that you heed this warning, it is all the same, but if you heed it not, do not forget that you were warned by **"THE DUKE."**

"Bah ! The croakings of an old pianiste, paid in gin and water, cannot surely be of much consequence. He meddles with that which concerns him not."

The day wore on, in the course of which Geoffrey's post was no sinecure. He had plenty to do, and he got through it to the satisfaction of his employers.

At the close of business, he could scarcely desert those who had, according to their statement, done their best to gain him the situation, and a "jolly" night was spent in inaugurating the happy occurrence. The "jolly night" consisted in imbibing as usual, the acme of human felicity with these choice spirits seem-

ingly consisting in consuming "cigars and cognac," or something in the same line.

Night after night these scenes recurred, and Geoffrey was fast sinking into that phase of intoxication, called an "habitual drunkard." He got drunk now from habit, and if he missed the usual excitement, he was listless, melancholy, and dispirited. Several times he was late at the desk, and received a reprimand from his employers, while Jenkins and Harland did not fail to circulate a report that he was spending far beyond his income, and that they had each lent him several heavy sums of money. The latter was false, the former partially true, but it suited their ulterior designs to spread abroad a suspicion of Geoffrey Wallis.

This had gone on for several months, and truth to say, Geoffrey had now involved himself considerably. His poor wife had begged, entreated, beseeched him to alter his ways; the only result of her fidelity to his interests being, that he now loved her less, so that in addition to poverty, she had to bear his upbraiding and the loss of his early love. Under these circumstances, poor Jessie could only wait, and pray that God might change her husband.

One evening, Geoffrey closed his book, locked the cash-box, delivered up the keys, and betook himself homeward—sober for this once. All had left save Jenkins and Harland, who usually locked the office, and delivered the door-keys to the housekeeper of Mr. Bangem, the partner who lived only a few streets off.

"Now quick, Harland open the cash-book. That's right, let me see. Hoare and Co., paid in £2000? Lend me your knife. There—that's a neat scratch out, I think. That makes it £1000. Now for the box."

Thereupon, the cash-box was opened and £1000 extracted. It would then appear in the future, that Geoffrey Wallis had feloniously entered the wrong amount and appropriated the difference to his own use.

"Here Jenkins, just hand your blotting paper over. Wallis has not left his about."

Accordingly Jenkins' blotting paper was used to dry the alterations, and to make the said alterations look more uniform. "£1000" had been all re-written.

With great *sang-froid*, they divided the plunder, closed the ledger and the office doors, and went their

ways congratulating themselves upon the results of their ingenuity.

"Of course you don't mean to return to the office tomorrow?" said Harland.

"Most certainly. How can we be discovered." It will be amusing to see our innocent friend make his morning cash—balance, and to see how correct he'll find it."

Morning came, and the two thieves enjoyed their anticipated "amusement."

At eleven o'clock, Mr. Hoare walked in, and immediately afterwards the "Duke" came with a letter for "Jack Jenkins" from Angus James. He waited for an answer."

"Good morning Mr. Bangem. I have come to pay you the other £2000, which will make our account clear," said Mr. Hoare.

"Thanks, sir. Wallis, turn to the cash-book. Ah! here it is. £2000 more you pay to day, and £1000 yesterday, make £3000, Mr. Hoare."

"£2000 yesterday, Mr. Bangem!"

"Some mistake, sir, my cash-book says £1000."

Mr. Hoare produced Geoffrey's receipt for £2000, whilst Jenkins and Harland were watching the "scene" with intense interest.

"Geoffrey Wallis, the son of my old friend, is this a theft on your part?"

"No sir, I did receive £2000, and this figure has been altered!"

"No doubt, young man, but by whom? Does your cash balance?"

"To a farthing, sir! Believe me, I know nothing of this, sir."

"It appears not, by the facts, I must say."

"Pardon me sir," said the Duke, "it is so, I have no doubt; will you demand the letter from Mr. Jenkins that I have just now brought him?"

"Mr. Jenkins: there is some insinuation conveyed in this. The letter, please, if you mean to retain your situation with credit."

Very sulkily, Jenkins gave the, as yet, unopened letter to his employer.

"Last night, you never came near with the plunder. If you don't come down handsome, I'll blow the whole game to Bangem, Slashy and Co., and you, not Geoffrey Wallis, shall be the sufferer."

Bangem read this letter, and Jenkins trembled violently, so did Harland. Geoffrey Wallis began to breathe again, and said to his master :—

“ Mr. Hoare paid by cheque, and I see the check for £2000 is here, in the box, whilst I miss two notes of £500 each. The thief has been a blunderer after all.”

“ And Bob Rollinson can tell something. When Bob was dusting Mr. Jenkins’ desk, this morning, he saw that Jenkins had been blotting up the ink off £1000, for it was left on the blotting paper. They say Bob Rollinson is a fool, but he ain’t near sich a big fool as he looks.”

Mr. Slashy here came in, and the blotting paper was submitted to him as proof of what was going on, and what had been done.

“ Well, Mr. Jenkins” said he, “ this looks rather like a case of felony.”

“ With an attempt to put the crime on the shoulders of Mr. Wallis,” added Bangem.

“ Come, don’t look like a couple of statues. What have you to say ? ” said the ferret-eyed Slashy, who had privately instructed Bob to fetch a policeman.

“ We shall say all we wish at a proper time and in a proper place, said Jenkins, for I see you suspect Harland also. He shivers enough to give a chap the ague, by way of sympathy. Ugh ! you’re a poor coward, with no more bravery than a cat.”

“ Why do you criminiate me ? ” gasped Harland.

“ I, criminiate you ? You mistake. You should lay the blame upon your legs, your quivering lips, etcetera. I would teach them not to tell tales if I were you.”

Here a policeman entered, and the two young men were searched. Nothing to convict him was found upon Jenkins, but in Harland’s pocket was a note for £500, which sounded crisp and new as the official drew it out.

“ You fool ! ” said Jenkins aside, “ why did’nt you get it changed ? ”

“ Ah ! What remark did you make ? ” said the policeman. “ Sorry to trouble you.”

“ Only that I thought you and all the rest of the company were deranged,” replied Jenkins, with an assumption of politeness which made the policeman wink.

“ Did you ? Well, if you included yourself, you

were not open to contradiction in your own case. Do you give these two young men in charge, sir ? "

" Certainly," said Slashy. " You know what for. I will appear at the preliminary examination. Now young men, anything you may have here, belonging to you, take away. I fancy you will sooner see Botany Bay, than the inside of this office again."

And so the two were removed, handcuffed, and in charge of the policeman. A sad position for two young men whose parents were respectable and respected. A sad lesson to all on the folly of allowing our appetite to drown every fine moral feeling ; an expensive lesson, when we give reputation and all we hold dear, in order to learn it.

" Well, this is a scene I was scarcely prepared for," said Mr. Hoare. " But I'm glad to find your honesty remains unscathed, and your reputation uninjured." This to Geoffrey.

" I could tell you that this is a plan to rob you sir, and to lay the blame on Mr. Wallis, which they have contemplated for some time, and Mr. Wallis's fraternising with them after the office is closed, facilitated their designs," said the Duke.

" Cut all such company in future," said Bangem to his clerk.

" It's a narrow escape you have had this time, but I am glad we can now trust you with more confidence than ever, said Slashy."

The Duke took his leave, but whilst he was standing there, Bob Rollinson had been staring at him with his large meaningless eyes, and occasionally rubbed his forehead as if he would fain recollect something, which his brains could not compass.

" Do you know anything of the person who has just gone out ? " said Bangem to Geoffrey.

" Well sir, I believe him to be very honest, but very poor. That's the extent of my knowledge."

" There is a vacancy in the warehouse as packer ; do you think he would like to accept it. If so I will offer it to him, as a reward for the hand he has had in bringing the villainy of thesee two late clerks of mine to light."

" I am quite sure he would be glad to have it, and if you will kindly allow me the pleasure of conveying the invitation to fill the post, it will look as if I were

discharging the debt of gratitude which, somehow, I feel I owe him."

"It shall be as you say."

And it was. The Duke forthwith entered upon his duties with great thankfulness. He made a very solemn resolution nevermore to taste drink, and he kept his word.

Geoffrey gradually rose in the estimation of his employers. His yearly salary was increased, and as his two principal tempters were now out of the way, having been convicted and sentenced to perpetual transportation, inducements to drink were not so frequent as formerly, and he returned home at pretty regular hours.

Ah! how delightful those times were for Jessie, that clinging affectionate wife, whose love knew no change, and who watched over Geoffrey like a guardian angel, welcoming with joy which only such a wife can know, the happy progression in their fortunes. She began to think that the world was more beautiful, that everything around her looked differently, for her heart was full, and she saw things with a loving eye. At this time was born to the young couple, a beautiful little boy, who was named Alick. Geoffrey, to do him justice, had now some glimmering notions that there was an object in life to be attained, and that the attainment of it, to a certainty, depended upon himself. He therefore strove more than ever to win the goodwill of his employers, and he was successful. They advanced him still more, and in the course of three years, his conduct having been satisfactory, and his occasional potations (indulged in secret, and limited by a very hard struggle,) being unknown, he received an offer from Messrs. Hoare and Co., to act as their representative, otherwise as their commercial traveller, with a salary attached to the post, which made his heart leap. After deliberation, he resolved to accept it, and in the ordinary run of events, was duly instructed in his duties, and accredited as their agent.

Jessie was installed in a little cottage at Camberwell. The house was furnished neatly, though not luxuriously. But it was their own, and until now, Jessie had never felt what it was to have an independent home. The Duke had petitioned Geoffrey to let him take up his abode as a lodger with Mrs. Wallis, and as Geoffrey would now be away for weeks together, some sort of

protection was necessary for his young wife. So that the Duke's proposition was acceded to, and he became an inmate of Hope Cottage.

Jessie had to part with Geoffrey. It was hard, but it was necessary; there was now another being besides themselves, for whom to make provision. She therefore hid her feelings away in the inmost recesses of her heart, knelt down, and prayed that God would preserve him from temptation, kissed him, and bade him farewell for a long three months.

CHAPTER XI.

"Come ! talk the matter over,
If thou be beaten, own it, then, at once
I would not force thee, or thine own free will;
But if there's reason in the tale I tell,
Then own that I have fought the battle well."

"There was comfort without, there was comfort within,
Love sang in the air, interchanges to win ;
But the lonely old widow sits weary and sad,
While nature around her is blithesome and glad.

No comfort for her, in her desolate heart,
The world and its joys you can tell hath no part ;
Her forehead is wrinkled, is pregnant with care,
She is mourning the past which has silvered her hair."

LET US now for a brief space return to S—. Nine years had elapsed since Geoffrey had left the locality, and many changes occur even in that short period. Time is always represented as flying quickly. He marks his passage relentlessly. With some he deals lightly, and passes them over as if loth to change the features he has hitherto loved; but with others he marks his flight in hard lines, bleaches their locks, nips their features, and saps their strength. Nor does he pass over inanimate objects. He makes the strong wall totter as he flaps his wings yearly. He encourages the ivy to wrap the strong oak and feed on its death. He laughs at the imaginary strength and durability of man's handiwork, as he watches them crumble and fall. But he mourns that he must see the heart unchanged, that sin and wickedness still walk the earth triumphantly, and as he mows down his yearly human harvest, he weeps that the weeds still outnumber the fruits.

We will peep in at Rose Cottage. When Geoffrey first left the locality, they mourned over him as over one lost, in whom the seeds of evil were fast taking root. That Jessie Ryle had gone with him, astonished them far more than his flight could possibly do, for

they supposed that she must have gone as his mistress, and to imagine that one so pure and so undefiled as Jessie, could thus lower herself, was to lose all faith in womankind.

As they held no communication with Mossgrove, they were still as ignorant as ever of Jessie's marriage, and time caused them to look upon the past as a dream, and willingly would they have looked upon it as such.

Alfred was an exception. He had a constant desire to know what had become of his guilty brother, and in the midst of his vastly increasing business, surrounded as he was by cares, with the responsibility of the welfare and comfort of his family and his work-people depending upon him, he yet often thought of his brother, and never forgot him when he knelt down to implore the protection of God for himself and his relatives.

We wish our readers to mark the changes in Rose Cottage. The little Jenny had grown up in the perfection of womanhood, and might be called surpassingly beautiful, without our being open to a charge of exaggeration. Andrew Dean often came to the cottage as the companion of her brother, and was welcomed; perhaps in her own mind he was even a little more warmly welcomed on his own individual account. But she had not acknowledged this—for a maiden's modest reason, he had not owned to more than a friendly feeling for her. But he felt more than he said, and whatever he had owned, the fact that he loved Jenny very deeply, was undeniable to himself. He never seemed to be happy except in her society; and when with her, he was often absent in mind, indulged in furtive glances, and was otherwise what the Yankees term "spoony." These, we take it, were pretty strong signs of love on his part. For Jenny, she could never breakfast until she had read every line of the leading articles in the *Longford Times*; and as the noble sentiments and beautiful thoughts found an echo in her breast, she inwardly felt that Andrew Dean, the writer of the said articles, and the proprietor of the paper, was a man after her own heart, one worth living and caring for.

Poor Mrs. Wallis was now but a wreck of her former self. After the flight of her son Geoffrey, and the death of her husband, she had sunk down into an

irremediable state of imbecility, which gradually emerged into idiocy. This result came slowly but surely, and her children wept at that which was out of their power to remedy. She would sit in the dining-room the day long, in one long continued stare at the portraits of her husband and her son Geoffrey. She scarcely ever varied from her position, except to eat a fragmentary meal. One peculiarity must not be forgotten; at the sight of intoxicating liquors, or even of a decanter used for containing them, her madness would immediately lose its "method," and she would dash the liquor or the glass on the ground with an exclamation of anger. She had now been in this pitiable state for five years, and all that love could suggest had been done to alleviate her affliction and sooth her mind.

We think it need not be said that intoxicants of all kinds had been relentlessly banished from the house, and that every one, save Mrs. Wallis, (and she was so in resolution) was a pledged teetotaler. At the time when we return to the cottage, Andrew Dean was there, a tall, handsome man now, with intellectual features; and Alfred too, had improved in nine years, but his brow wore a very thoughtful look, and it was plain that if his business were prospering, his cheerfulness had not increased.

On this day a large Temperance Meeting was to be held in one of the rooms at the factory. Thither Andrew and Alfred were about to repair.

" You will speak to them Andrew ?" said Alfred.

" It will be an opportunity I should not like to lose ; but as workmen generally do not like long prosy speeches, I shall not offend them, be certain. *You* will have a long speech to give I doubt not, since you will have to give the 'experience' of the last nine years."

" Last nine years !" Mrs. Wallis said. It was a faint gleam of intelligence which slipped beyond her grasp, ere she knew she had it, and she heaved a sigh, whilst large hot tears fell from her eyes, as if the heart would fain speak in that way.

" Poor mother, it has been a sad experience for her, a sad one for us all, so far as our own family is concerned, Mr. Andrew," said Jenny.

" Now whilst we are on such matters, will you pardon me if I risk the opening of an old wound, by giving

you some intelligence at which I think you will not be sorry," said Andrew.

"Go on, Andrew, say what you have to say; you are too old a friend for us to take umbrage at, and you have too fine feelings to make me fear that you will wound us unnecessarily."

"The old gardener at Mossgrove told me recently, that several years ago, in fact, just after Geoffrey—pardon me—just after Geoffrey left you, the old lady, Mrs. Ryle, had a note from Jessie asking forgiveness for taking such a course as she had, without the consent of one whom she so dearly loved as her mother. She said that Geoffrey married her when he took her away. This I'm sure you will be glad to hear."

"I am, indeed," said Alfred. "I am glad both for his own sake, and for Jessie's."

"Oh! Mr. Dean, it is the best intelligence you have ever brought me," said Jessie; and she caught his hands between her own, and looked so lovingly at him, that he thought he could do anything to secure such smiles all to himself.

"Well, don't thank me any more. I only do my duty in telling you."

"And—and—Alfred stopped. Why should I hesitate? Have you heard any other news of my brother? Do not fear to tell me, good or bad."

"I have heard nothing more, I assure you, otherwise I should consider that I ought at once to tell you without hesitation."

"I will supply the dearth. He has got a good situation, perhaps has a grand house of his own. Has reformed his habits, and is well off in the world," said sanguine Jenny.

"This is what you would fain have it be, Jenny love, said her brother. But whether the reality is equal to your imagination, is quite another matter."

"God grant that it may surpass it," said Andrew.

"I shall soon know," said Alfred. "For if no further intelligence arrive, in the course of a few months, I will find him out, and know his position, if it cost me the whole of my fortune."

Mrs. Wallis went up to the portrait of Geoffrey, stroked its face and nodded to it.

"You are a dear good brother," said Jenny; "but if you gentlemen are going to this meeting, I would advise you to start, for it is near the time now."

"Do you walk on first Alfred, and I will join you soon," said Andrew. Alfred did so, and seemed to know the reason why his absence was desirable.

Immediately that he had gone, Andrew took the hand of Jenny. She was trembling and pale, and with a woman's instinct, seemed intuitively to know what was coming.

"Will you oblige me by walking into the conservatory?"

"But you will be too late for the meeting." "Miss Wallis, I am serious, and have something serious to say. I know you will not trifle with me, for you guess, I see, what I have to communicate."

He led her out and seated her on one of the ornamental benches. A long silence followed, in which Andrew seemed to be thinking what he should say.

Jenny broke the stalks of several valuable plants, and looked anywhere but at Andrew.

Suddenly he took her hand, and in a low, musical but emphatic tone, said:—

"Miss Wallis—Jenny—you guess, if you do not feel certain, how much I love you. It is not till lately that I have become convinced of this. For I do love you dearly and sincerely, more for your own affectionate heart, and noble thoughts, than for anything else which may accompany you. Your answer, Jenny?"

"My brother Alfred?" questioned she, in accents scarcely audible.

"Has given me his consent to sue for you, otherwise, I had not made my present declaration. You love me, do you not, Jenny?"

"I will not deny it, Andrew. I first of all loved you as a brother; you seemed to supply the place of the one I have lost. Lately—."

"You have thought you could love me as your husband, and he pressed the affectionate girl to his heart, and imprinted upon her lips his first kiss."

"But stay, there is one condition," said Jenny.

"Name it, love, and if it be anything I can do, it is acceded to."

"I could never marry, Andrew, so long as I was ignorant of where my brother Geoffrey is, and I would rather marry with the knowledge that he has been rescued from the downward course which he seemed so likely to pursue. To marry and be ill at ease, would

scarcely be wise, and without this knowledge I should not be a happy wife."

" You shall have all the information it is in my power to gain for you, dear Jenny; and so that you love me, I can afford to wait for this prospect of your perfect happiness."

" So be it then. Now away to the meeting, or you may perhaps find it all over when you arrive, and thus miss the opportunity you should not like to lose."

It was an important day, and an important meeting.

The large packing-room at the factory had been entirely cleared out, and the result was, space enough to accommodate a thousand people. This area was divided into two parts, the first portion being railed off for the factory people under Alfred's immediate control, and the other for those of the general public who chose to attend. Both divisions were well filled, and in a corner of the latter half, Hargreaves and a dozen ruffians hired for the occasion, were there to do whatever occasion might require. That this would not be in harmony with the feelings of the promoters of that meeting, it is scarcely necessary to add. Taylor was there too, with another division in the opposite corner of the floor. Freeman, too, had been sought up, and was found lodging under a haystack, a vagabond and an outcast, wandering about with no aim or object, moneyless, friendless, and needy. Hargreaves offered him the place as waiter at his Inn, and he had accepted it, drinking all that was offered him, and thinking no state so delightful as that of entire intoxication. Taylor had been discharged from the factory, and now, as he said, "picked up a living anyhow," the anyhow being in reality, "nohow," since he and his family were half starved; and when Hargreaves offered him five shillings to go to this meeting, and "get up an opposition," he hailed the proposition with supreme delight. Freeman had not yet met Harrison; people said that it was as well not, for if Harrison were ever so great a drunkard, he loved his daughter, and had an old account to settle with Freeman on that score. He had long since repented turning her and her unborn child out into the world.

Alfred was speaking when Andrew entered, and these were his words:—

" You know, my men, that this is our ninth anniversary. Every year, we meet to congratulate each other

as friends should do, on the fact that one and all of us, master and men, are entirely teetotal. People say it is impossible that a large body of men can do without intoxicating stimulants and retain their health; we have disproved this. What has teetotalism done for you, for us, for all? You get one shilling per week more pay, I am no loser by that, for your system procures me better work and more of it. Well, you spend some of you, five shillings a week less. (Aye! aye! from the men.) Are your homes badly furnished? Are your children half clothed? Do you make your own back (and other people's too) suffer for your belly, and its degrading appetite for drink? Is your life a constant burden, because your conscience is uneasy? No, no; a thousand times, no! These things were, but they are not. Time was when you blamed me, and accused me of injustice for wanting you to adopt those principles. Is it so, now, after you have proved them? (Three cheers for the master.) I have heard your wives and children bless me as I went by their doors; not that the praise *is* due to me. I have merely shewn you what you yourselves can effect by a little resolution; you have shut up all the beershops except one."

"Three cheers for good liquor, and for 'The Honest Man,'" shouted Hargreaves' partisans. But it was a feeble cheer, drowned by a thousand hisses.

"Yes, *I* say three cheers for the honest man, not the sign, but the man himself. Not the sham, who robs the family of a poor man to fill his own till, but the reality, who does as he would be done by," said Alfred. "Yes, three cheers for the honest man, but three groans for the dishonest one. (Here the audience gave three very melancholy groans.) Now let me resume. I don't want to be personal, but if I am interrupted, I must say hard things, and fling heavy stones. Well, in addition to shutting up the beershops, you have a beautiful choir of five hundred voices; you have a literary institute, and good reading rooms; a first-class library; three well-trained brass bands; you have now a 'Literary Olympic,' in which you compete for prizes; you have coffee-rooms, discussion classes, concerts, cricket clubs and gymnasium, and all through one cause. This is what teetotalism has done; it has organised all those healthy sources of recreation for you, and has even enabled some of you to buy your own cottages and the land adjoining. So before I sit down and call upon

my friend Mr. Dean to give you a short speech, previous to our proceeding to take our usual pic-nic and trip, let me ask you to give three hearty cheers for Teetotalism."

And they were given ; three such tremendous cheers were seldom heard, except upon the S—— Teetotal Anniversary. The groans and hisses of Hargreaves and his " honest men " were unheard, as Andrew Dean rose and was cheered.

" Short, if not sweet, shall be what I have to say. Your good master traces all these effects to the right source certainly, but there was an instrument to suggest and carry out. A steam-engine, as you who make them here, well know, is a magnificent machine. Its marvellous mechanism must be put together with the precision of the most minute watch. It is a wonderful mechanical contrivance, but as yet it is motionless and powerless. It is of no use until steam enters its throat, and sends round the wheels, communicating life and power to a thousand other pieces of mechanism. Well, it is precisely the same with a great principle. We may admire it immensely, but it requires activity to develop its usefulness before we can appreciate it. It wants steam to move it. In other words, a warm hand and heart must be at work to put the theory into practice. Well, Mr. Wallis is the steam that has sent round the great wheel of Teetotalism in this locality ; and your improved condition and bright prospects shew that his efforts have not been in vain. I could give a sad and sorrowful experience of the effects of drink in my own case, and in that of others. Some of you know this. However, we will not mar the days' pleasure, but I call upon you to give three of the heartiest cheers of which your lungs are capable, cheers for THE STEAM —Mr. Alfred Wallis."

If you can imagine a superlative degree, one remove above the cheers given at the conclusion of Mr Wallis's speech, you can fancy them given now. At the close, Wilson rose, and asked if he might say a few words. Next to his master, Wilson was now the most popular man in the factory, so that it was not difficult to get the requisite assent.

" Fellow-workmen, don't think that I'm going to keep you long, and don't expect a speech, because I'm quite unaccustomed to public speaking. But I thought some one ought to represent you, and as nobody else

volunteers, why, I'll just say two or three words. I speak then, on behalf of my fellow-workmen. We thank you, sir, for the reformation you began and carried out. It has been the greatest blessing we ever had, has this teetotalism. Our homes are little parades to what they were, and we carry out, in all its integrity, the total abstinence principles ; and without thinking a deal of ourselves, I may say that your reward lies partly in the fact that you have now the most sober and the steadiest, set of workmen in the county. (I have, and I know it, from Alfred.) We will persevere in the course we have begun. We have tasted its sweets, and it would be hard work now to return to our old course. Individually, I may say that teetotalism has been an incalculable blessing to me. Through the generosity of my master, and my own exertions, for I've tried to do my best, Mr. Wallis has intimated to me that I am now to be his representative, that I am to travel through the length and breadth of the land, and sell the beautiful machines made in this now famous factory. To you, sir, I again address myself, and in sitting down, beg to give you our warmest thanks for the liberal way in which you treat us every anniversary."

"Down with that cant, Wilson. Down with him. He's a sneak."

This came from Hargreaves and his fraternity, but quietly and firmly the whole set was put out of doors, while a flag bearing the inscription, "Down with the Pumps ! " "Hurrah for Beer!" was instantly torn into a thousand shreds, and the pole hurled into the street after the worthy standard-bearers.

Part of the programme arranged by Hargreaves was that they should commence an impromptu riot, and thus throw the whole assembly into confusion ; but the overwhelming numbers of their opponents cowed them, in addition to which, the independent half of the audience seemed very clearly to be in favour of the workmen, and Sam Hargreaves went home to his wife, and told her that making a disturbance was "nogo." To tell the truth, nurse Hargreaves was far from sorry. She could not forget that all they had, they were possessed of through the Wallis family. She could not forget that she had nursed the daughter and the sons, and she furthermore remembered that the last nine years experience of drink had slightly changed her

opinions. At the bar, in the "smug," and in the "tap," her experience of what drink did, had been a sad one; whilst it was obvious to even one of Mrs. Hargreaves' limited understanding, that it was the lowest portion of the working community who patronized the "Honest Man." All these reasons combined to make her say:—

" Well, if so be as ever I get the chance o' shutting up this ere place, I know whose hands 'll put up the first shutter. I've hed enough on it, God knows."

Her wish was realised. But we must not anticipate by saying the manner thereof.

At a given signal, the whole assembly moved toward the river. Boats had been provided for the workman, and the general public were told, that if they liked to join them at the scene of the pic-nic, three miles away, they would find a good tea provided for all.

Such swarms of boats, such a sea of happy faces were never seen before. The wives of the workmen had of course joined the party. The pleasure would otherwise be incomplete. The choir sang one of their choicest refrains, and then the brass bands joined together in lively strains. Flags waved in the air, merry laughter and witty jokes floated to the river banks, and in this way, the gigantic party made their way through some beautiful scenery to the appointed place. There was plenty of willing women, and no mean provision in the way of edibles. The woman arranged the latter in four circles, one within another, and then the great multitude sat down and commenced their repast. This finished, games of all kinds commenced, and the vast company separated into small parties. We need not describe this scene, suffice it to say that all enjoyed themselves, and as the sun began to dip behind the distant hills, the combined bands played the National Anthem, and the whole party then assembled together ready to start homewards. In all these proceedings, Andrew and Alfred had joined as heartily as the rest; and Jenny Wallis was leaning on her lover's arm, as much delighted with the sight, as the most active of the pleasure seekers.

At this moment, and just as the crowd was moving off toward the river, a female ran out of the woods toward the company. She had no bonnet, no shawl, and her gown was old and very much torn, whilst her hands and face were covered with scratches, as if she had made her way through the tangled brush-

wood in a reckless manner. Her face wore an expression of wildness, and she yelled and shouted as she came near the company. Suddenly she stopped short in her career, and shrieked out the words :

"Drink ! drink ! drink ! I tell you to give me drink ! It is my only friend. It drowns recollection. It takes away the memory. Drink ! drink ! drink ! There are fiends at my heels now. What, what ? don't you know me ? I'm Annie Harrison ! Ah ! I once was as gay and happy as you ; but you don't want to know me now. Keep off ! keep off ! I'm tainted, and you'll pollute yourselves."

Andrew advanced toward the unhappy girl, and as he did so, the blanched features of Freeman were disclosed to the girl's view.

"Keep off, Mr. Dean, I know you, but keep off. Look behind you, there's a devil there, see ! he wears a human form, but he's a devil for all that. See how he slinks away. Oh ! my God ! give me drink, drink, drink ! You won't ? Then there's only one thing will drown the memory, besides, and to it I'll go. Keep off all, don't follow me."

With these words the girl dashed away towards the river, far away out of range of the boats. Scores followed her, but she ran in desperation. She mounted a stone at the river side, threw her arms wildly about and said :

"This is better than drink. Nothing drowns the memory like water."

Ere a soul could reach her, the unhappy girl leaped into the river. A dozen boats pushed off, but their aid was of no avail. A strong man instantly dashed into the river, and with vigorous strokes made for the place where Annie Harrison had disappeared. He dived, but though he clutched the dress, it might have been called a shroud, for the poor "unfortunate" was dead, and her convulsed face wore an expression of intense agony. Around her neck was a miniature of Freeman, and in her hand, was found a small portrait, apparently that of a dead child. It was her own no doubt, and she had preserved this small momento of what we must call *love* on her part, whatever it may have been on the part of her heartless seducer.

Harrison, for it was her father who had tried to save her, hung over the body of his dead child. But she was presently taken from him and removed to S—.

It was a sad conclusion to a joyous day, but it was a corroborative lesson to all the spectators.

The fearful incident needed no comment, and Alfred ordered the company to move homewards. A change had come over them all. It might have been a party of deaf and dumb beings returning to S—. The bands were silent, and those who did speak, spoke in whispers, as if the occasion were too solemn to indulge in audible conversation.

But this was not the closing scene of that day, unfortunately. There was a worse to follow. Freeman, immediately on his discovery, had made for the woods. He intended remaining there until the party had left the vicinity. By this plan, he would be secure from annoyance, and from the severe handling he would otherwise have received in the heat of the moment. No one had seen him go; that is, none save one. That one was Harrison.

Even whilst the desire of saving his daughter was paramount in his mind, he had marked the disappearance of Freeman, and as soon as the party began to move homewards in solemn silence, he left the ranks and entered the woods.

He had not to look long, for Freeman was desperate now, and cared not what befel him.

The two men faced each other, both of them angry, and each at enmity with the other.

"So, I've found you at last, eh?" began Harrison.

"If you've got any eyes, they'll tell you."

"Yes! my eyes tell me that I look upon the seducer—the murderer of my daughter!"

"You lie, Harrison. If your daughter throws life away, it's no business of mine."

"No. But it is of mine. I look for the cause, and I find it in you. You have taken one life, and I mean to punish you for it."

With these words, Harrison caught Freeman by the throat, but with a motion quick as lightning, his opponent slipped from him.

Again the enraged father rushed at him, and this time threw him with such force that the fall produced a dull heavy resonant sound. In an instant Harrison's knee was upon the fallen man's breast.

"Now then, what do you say? Is'nt it about time you received your reward for all you've done to me

and mine." He thrust his knee deeper into Freeman's chest.

"Take your knee away, gasped the man. Fool! you would not murder me?"

Even under these circumstances, Freeman got his hand into his coat pocket, and by a violent effort released himself. Harrison was now undermost, and whilst he was struggling in his turn, Freeman drew forth a large clasp knife, opened the blade, and struck the gleaming weapon into Harrison's breast. It pierced to the heart, and the red life-blood gushed forth, and bepattered the murderer's face.

Harrison gave a moan and expired. The murderer fled on the instant, but left behind him the tell-tale knife.

The sun set, and the moon rose. The pale light quivered through the verdant branches, and played upon the ghastly face of the dead man, now leaving the scene in darkness, now illuminating it with horrid distinctness. The sun rose again, rose high in meridian splendour, and dried up the fountain of life-blood before the body was found by some villagers, identified and removed to S—. An inquest was held, both upon the daughter and the father. Verdicts of "suicide under insanity," and of "murder against James Freeman" were brought in, and both were buried in one grave, with the distracted mother as the only real mourner.

The murderer was found hiding in an outhouse, was tried, and found guilty.

Whilst under condemnation, Alfred called upon him, urging him to make the most of the very few moments now remaining to him.

The last few days had made the man more sober than he had been for years, and when Alfred spoke kindly to him, he burst into tears.

"Ah! sir, I never should have been here but for one thing. You know what that is, cos you've gin it the slip. You've done right, I can see it now. Years ago, I first deluded myself with it, and then I seduced Annie Harrison. In my case, it's caused three deaths —two already, and one to come. Oh! my God, I wish all the drinkshops were at perdition."

"Hush! do not think of these things now. Employ your time in preparing for the world to which you are soon going."

"I dare'nt sir, I dare'nt. I'm not ready for it; I'm afraid to think!" In this state of mind the man continued to his last hour. We do not care to dwell upon this scene further. He paid the penalty of his crimes by his own life, but his life and the incidents of it, were remembered in S—— for years after, whilst the names added to the lists of the "S—— Temperance Association" were considerable.

If the reader deem this narrative exaggerated, let him read the police reports of the last five years, and he shall find instances to put this into the shade. Instances which abound in the darkest hues of crime.

* * * * *

For a moment, very briefly, we would have the reader peep in at Mossgrove. It has not altered; everything is as beautiful as it was when Jessie Ryle trod the golden footpaths of the garden, and tended the parti-coloured flower beds. The house is as snug as ever, and there is the old gardener working away, not so actively, and not so blithely as before, perhaps, still he is there.

Within, sits the lonely widow. Her life has changed vastly. Days seem wearisome, and the sweet oblivion which sleep purchases is denied her. The mornings are aimless, she has nothing to live for, no one to care for. The only support to the weakened vine has been snatched away, and the plant totters; soon it will fall.

"Had'nt you better come out and take the air, mam?" said the old gardener.

"No, thank you, Joseph."

"Always the same answer, mam; I'm sure your health will suffer."

"What matter, good old friend? I care not how soon it leaves me."

"But is this right, mam? Life was meant to be cared for."

"Joseph, you get quick at argument. What made life desirable, has been taken from me; why, therefore, need I care to live?"

"But I'm sure she will come back."

"If she come not back, poor and deserted, I shall not receive her."

"But surely that is inconsistent. If she returns prosperous, a virtuous wife, and a kind mother, surely you would not deny her?"

"She deserted me—left me without my consent."

It was perhaps a meaningless answer, but it was the only one she could give as a justification—the one with which she had consoled herself for her comparative harshness during the past nine years.

For she had needed consolation, and she had long yearned for her daughter's return. But the trees budded and the leaves fell many times. Yet she came not, and a gaunt phantom in the shape of a thought, began to haunt the care worn lady wherever she went.

She might die without gazing again upon her daughter !

CHAPTER XII.

"The Road ! The Road ! with its pleasures so gay,
And the numerous scenes that line the way ;
Where sin and shame in a garb of white
Caress and lure ; yet damn and blight !

"If you would test a young man's principles, put him on the Road, send him through the world as a Commercial Traveller. There, he will have to go through a fiery ordeal, and is worthy of all praise if he come forth as unscathed as he went in."

GEOFFREY WALLIS was some time before he got accustomed to the routine of a commercial traveller's life. Its business was so complex, and changeable, so fortless and yet for all that, so pleasing in the kaleidoscopic views of life which it presented, in a word, it was so entirely *new* to him, that weeks elapsed before, to use a business phrase, he could be said to be "in harness." Now let us see with what thoughts and actions he commenced this new phase of his existence.

He had never left his wife before. He was not naturally harsh, more especially with her whom he really did love, and knowing her fond care over him, he was moved to more than an ordinary degree, when he clasped her sobbing form to his breast, and kissed his golden-haired little child, Alick.

"Geoffrey, love, are you confident as to your being able to face every sort of temptation which may assail you? Remember all you leave at home. Do not forget that at least the happiness of two beings depend upon you. You have been brave lately, Geoffrey, and you know how happy we have been. See, take this old love token, this ring you once gave me, and I know that when you see it, it should bring back pleasant memories."

"I will take it, Jessie. But do not fear me. Time shall shew whether I mean now to live for you and

that little one. I *will* try, Jessie, love, I can do no more!"

"And God help you, my own dear husband."

Those were her last loving words, "God help you," and an hour afterwards, Geoffrey was whirling away by an express train, with a number of sample cases, to his first destination.

Even whilst the train sped on like the whirlwind, Geoffrey was thinking.

He knew well his frailty; he felt more than ever, that now when he was to go in a strange land, when no one was there to overlook, contradict, forbid or lecture him, when he had no bridle to his own inclinations, save his own will, when he himself was to overlook himself, when his better angel was to war against the tempter, and all this in the narrow compass of his own heart—he did indeed need to "gird up his loins," and gather together all his good resolutions, to summon up all the recollections of his past life, and gather wisdom from their lessons.

"I will drink very sparingly, thought he, and to tell the truth, Geoffrey meant it. But at such times, the real temptation is not before us, we are apt to talk largely about resisting temptation, when the phantom is out of sight. But let it appear, let the syren pleasure say 'come! come!' and we find those stern resolutions melting away like ice before the summer sun, and such is our inconsistency, that we smile at our former self.

For the first time in his life, Geoffrey entered a "commercial room," that portion of an inn, set apart especially for the use and convenience of travellers alone. He met there several gentlemen, and was soon at home and in conversation with them. After awhile he went about business, and was so successful as almost to please himself, rather an exception with young commercial travellers.

Dinner-time came on. It is necessary to explain matters here. It is not generally known to that portion of the public who are quite indifferent as to the peculiarities of the "genus" traveller, that these gentlemen have a set of rules for their own room. Some of these it is quite foreign to our subject to introduce, but one we must particularly name. It was a strict rule that at dinner, you must either drink wine, or pay your share of the wine bill (which was equally

divided amongst the diners) and let someone else drink your share for you. In other words, "pay or drink. Now if there is an arbitrary custom which ought to be "put down," this is indeed one. Let us take a very young man, sent out into the commercial world for the first time. He is almost compelled to drink, for in nine cases out of ten, he has not the moral courage to stand the other alternative—that of being laughed at, and termed "commercial unique." How many young men have taken habitually to drink, and have left the road, useless to themselves and to the whole world; left it to walk the certain road to perdition I cannot tell. I can name numberless instances, could mention many a hopeful young man with brains, with talents, with accomplishments, who has been dragged down from his seat of respectability, to the lowest society can offer him. This young man is brought to the commercial table, and in all probability we have a red-faced toper for president. "What wine gentlemen?" and the portly president orders it in, and continues to exercise his office, until perhaps the shame-faced young man drops under the table, a result of "manfully" trying to drink his share of the wine bill. Can any custom be more despotic, more absurd? Those young men are sent upon the road, as the cleverest, the most respectable of their class. In most cases, they are possessed of rare accomplishments, and these very perfections often lure them to their fall.

They have circles and friends of their own, their talents are in constant requisition to enliven and entertain the "gentlemen of the road," their brain is fired by the repeated "treats" which their liberal brethren are ever ready to offer "a good sort;" in all probability business becomes a secondary consideration, it is neglected, or perhaps as in many an instance, money is embezzled; the game carried on some time, until the great crash finally arrives, and in course of time the "circle" wonder where their lively young friend can be. I once saw a "lively young friend" crouching in rags, on the opposite side of the street to the one where a member of the "circle" was strutting about in all the conscious glory of being able to drink his share of the dinner wine like a man, and "not be such a fool as to make a beast of himself."

This description was applicable to every commercial

traveller, at the time we write of. There were no "do as you like" hotels, no temperance houses from which all intoxicating beverages had been banished, and where you might ask for dinner without feeling painfully conscious that you were expected to drink, whether your will and inclination said yes, or the contrary. True, there were occasional instances of men who would either "box Harry," which means do without dinner at all, or else would purposely dine before or after the main body had sat down to, or left, the dinner table. This, in order that they might do as they liked, and drink or be sober as the case suited them. But they bore a proportionate amount of ignominy in consequence. The waiter gave you less attention, the landlord failed in his accustomed obsequiousness, and in all probability, the chambermaid's retroussè nose, looked more sky-ward than usual, when in close proximity to you. You were also a marked man amongst your commercial brethren, shut out from pleasurable intercourse with them; set down as an unsociable spirit, and not at all a credit to the road.

So that it was more comfortable (independent of all principles) to take matters as they came, and to follow the custom, particularly when there was a partial inclination that way, and your opinion was, that the custom formed by no means an unpleasant one.

Geoffrey's first impulse was to refuse wine. But when member after member of the dinner table named the wine they would prefer, in a business like way, the faint resolve faded away from his mind, and was replaced by the inward promise that he would be very temperate. To do him justice, he was so. When the decanter was passed to him, and his palate was by no means unwilling to be again refreshed, he thought of his dear wife and child, of their now comparative comfort, and what would certainly become of them if he betrayed his trust, and "slept when he should have been watching."

For more than a year, Geoffrey battled manfully against the desire to overstep the boundary line of moderation. He succeeded, as he thought, in subduing his inclination. But this was his failing. When we think we stand, the scripture tells us we should take heed, lest we fall. So with Geoffrey. His fancied security formed his very insecurity; his sense of stability, caused a carelessness which augured ill for the

future. We cannot play with flames, and come forth with unscorched fingers; we are sure to be burnt some time or other.

The money placed at Geoffrey's command, and under his control, was large in amount, and his remittances were made daily. At the end of every journey, his expenses and salary were to be allowed, and the balance of customer's cash, would be placed to the credit of the firm by Geoffrey. We are now about to speak of one particular night about twelve months after he had taken to his present life. It was the third of a six months' journey.

On this evening, Geoffrey had been "balancing his cash," and to his consternation, found a deficit of four hundred pounds. His brain reeled, and his hands trembled as he leant over the desk, and again rapidly went through his figures. How had it come to pass? Had he been robbed? No, it must be an error. Again the hazy figures were added up, but they still persisted in coming to the self same sum—no more and no less. He thought about it until his brain ached. True, he knew he had spent money very freely of late, and had overstepped the bounds of prudence in drinking. But surely not to the extent of four hundred pounds! In sheer desperation, he turned round to a tall, gentlemanly looking "commercial" who was flirting with a cheroot, being allowed the sublime privilege of tainting the atmosphere in the sacred room, after the hour of nine p.m.

"Johnstone, I scarce know what to make of this."

"Nor can I, my boy, till I know what you mean."

"I am four hundred pounds short, in balancing my cash."

"Ah! I never balance my cash. Its inconvenient. Best to take things easy."

At this moment a commotion was heard in the passage leading to the commercial room; but Geoffrey again bent over his accounts, more earnestly, more nervously than ever.

"Boots! bring in my sample cases, and take that portmanteau to my room. I shall stay here some days. This, from the stranger."

The six or seven inmates of the room turned to scrutinize the new comer. All except Geoffrey. He was too busy with other matters.

"Good evening gentlemen. Beautiful day we've had."

Somebody said yes, to this general observation, meant for anybody who liked to take notice of it, and the stranger forthwith commenced a conversation with his neighbour.

"Come far to day, sir?" said the neighbour.

"Only from Leicester."

"Ah! you represent a Leicester house, probably," insinuated the neighbour.

"No, you're out. I neither do in elastic boots and shoes, nor hosiery."

"I beg pardon. I am in the cheese line; your's is similar, perhaps?"

"No, I travel in what you are patronizing just now."

"Ah! What in liquors—wine and spirit trade? I drink to its success."

"Thank you, sir. You shall do so at my expense, very shortly."

The stranger then took up the "*Times*," and was perusing it eagerly. Geoffrey resumed his conversation with Johnstone, relative to the deficiency.

"Well, I can make it no different. I am still four hundred pounds short, and I cannot for the life of me, imagine how I came to lose it."

"Ah! well, you betted rather freely last evening, when you were decidedly groggy!"

"I betted! For goodness sake say what about?"

"Well, you insisted upon betting a wager that you could drink a gallon of wine without taking breath. It was really stupid of you, but you *would* do it."

"I bet upon such an absurd topic? I remember nothing of it."

"I dare say not. Should wonder very much if you did, you were so salubrious."

"But how much did I bet? Surely, surely, you must be mistaken!"

"Well, I am fifty pounds richer than I was last night, and it was once your money; you bet the whole company round, and of course, you lost. The money was put down all fair and square, and I expect that's where you lost some of yours."

"But if this be true, surely you do not mean to take advantage of my drunken freak, and keep the money, do you, Johnstone?"

"It's a debt of honour, ain't it gentlemen?" appealed Johnstone to his friends.

"Oh! certainly; the gentleman would insist upon

the bet, and he must not now blame us if we refuse to refund *honestly-earned* money."

Geoffrey Wallis turned round to the whole company. His face was blanched, and as he stood up, the stranger looked over "*The Times*" newspaper, and recognized him, and also took in the whole sense of the conversation at once.

"Gentlemen!" said Geoffrey, "I will not be so dis-courteous as to say that you have done me wrong, but I leave that to your own "Consciences to decide."

He sat down, and as he did so, the stranger muttered, "conscience indeed! Is Geoffrey Wallis blessed with too keen a one I wonder? There will be work for me here, I see."

The neighbour then turned to the stranger once more, whilst Geoffrey retired to the furthest portion of the large room.

"I presume you represent a London House?" resumed the neighbour.

"Oh! dear no, we have not attained such celebrity."

"I suppose I shall be inquisitive, if I ask where you usually date from?"

"Certainly not. I represent a new house at Longford."

The speaker seemed to raise his voice as he uttered the last word. With a purpose, too. Geoffrey rapidly faced the speaker, and discovered Sam Hargreaves.

Yes, Sam Hargreaves, wonderfully altered. Not in facial appearance, nor in figure, nor, we are sorry to add, in heart. Only in dress, which was now that of a gentleman; in deportment, which had certainly altered for the better; and in language, which he had schooled down to the requirements of polite society, and only discovered himself by an occasional *lapsus lingue*, which was charitably put down as the eccentricity of a well-educated gentleman.

Hargreaves had the advantage of Geoffrey. His discovery had been made quietly. But Geoffrey's surprise was very evident, and the knowledge that Hargreaves had been a listener to the recent conversation, added to the annoyance, indignation, and irritability caused by the fact, that for the sum of £100, the man before him had sold his reputation to a father now dead, and had thus cloaked his own villainous share of the transaction. His first impulse was to rise up and tell the company into what society they had fallen. He

did not reflect that his own reputation was scarcely well enough established to permit of the transactions of past years being once more revived against him. So he was rising with flushed face, and indignant gestures, but Hargreaves anticipated him, and was far too polite to quarrel at the present time. He therefore held out his hand to Geoffrey.

"What, Mr. Geoffrey Wallis, the respected representative of Messrs. Hoare and Co. I am delighted to see you, my old friend; give me your hand!"

This brusque salutation did not seem to suit Geoffrey, and he held back, whilst there was a very perceptible frown upon his forehead. This caused Hargreaves to add in an undertone:—

"No nonsense, you know. Better for us to be friends than enemies."

And as recollection and reflection returned, Geoffrey reluctantly held forth his hand.

"An old friend of mine, you perceive," said Hargreaves to the neighbour. "Suppose we celebrate the meeting with a bottle of wine, what will you take Mr. Wallis?"

"Well, I don't care what, say sherry."

The late president of the dinner-table, *who was himself in the wine and spirit trade*, here stepped in, and proposed that the whole company should settle down for "a night's quiet social intercourse," and expressed a hope that he might be allowed to inaugurate the evening with a bowl of punch, for which, with their consent, he would now call.

Assent was given, and ere long an octagon of commercials were seated round the large table, with a smoking bowl of punch gracing the centre.

"Gentlemen! her majesty the Queen!"

And our good Queen, by the aid of a bowl of punch, was forthwith wished health and happiness.

"Gentlemen! our newly-found friends; and may their friendship be cemented afresh."

(Not with such quick-lime as treachery and deceit, thought Geoffrey; nor with such treacherous elements as compose that "glorious institution," a bowl of punch.)

"Gentlemen! to the friendship that never wavers, and the heart that never betrays."

Geoffrey drank this toast, and as he did so, touched his glass with that of Hargreaves. Their eyes met,

and Sam Hargreaves thenceforth knew what course he meant to pursue.

"Gentlemen! The Road! may it long continue to be traversed by such gentlemen as those who honour me with their presence this evening."

We might utter another sentiment, wishing these good "gentlemen" all the success they deserve; but decidedly separating them from that bowl of punch.

Our reader knows probably, the routine of a commercial convivial evening. You have songs of the Road, and plenty of anecdotes of eccentric customers.

Johnstone gave one of the latter, and as it may serve to open the eyes of gullable shopkeepers, as to how their commercial friends go about getting orders from them, we here give it in the exact words of the accomplished Johnstone:—

"Well, gentlemen, you all know Gapes, the Nottingham draper. I somehow never could get an order from Gapes. I had not the '*open sesame*' that led me to his good graces. I had tried him repeatedly, and at last gave it up as a bad job. One day I met in with Smith, who does business with Gapes.

"How is it you *manage* to do business with him?" said I to Smith.

"Don't you know his foible?"

"No, indeed I don't. Perhaps you'll kindly enlighten me?"

"Certainly; more especially as your class of goods don't interfere with mine. You must know that Gapes' failing is bitter beer, and Gapes knows that they sell the very best at an inn not six doors from his shop; so Gapes never will give an order, or look at any samples, until his voice and powers of articulation have been wetted."

"Well, gentlemen, I thanked Smith and determined to try the efficacy of his advice. In the course of time, I called upon Gapes again. But, instead of beginning about business, I at once intimated that I meant having a glass of bitter; did he mind joining me? 'Oh, certainly not,' was his reply.

"Well, I let Gapes go in at bitter beer, until he was entirely and completely fuddled. I stuck one per cent on my prices, to pay for that beer, and had the pleasure of getting an excellent order from Gapes. I also continue to retain his favour, and he continues to drink

my beer, every time I have the honour of calling upon him."

"Gentlemen! Here's a good-health to Mr. Johnstone and Gapes. May they continue to be bound together by the affectionate ties of 'bitter beer.'"

With anecdotes, songs and recitations, the evening was spun out, and as Geoffrey drank every toast, he soon favoured the company with a specimen of his abilities, and was, as usual, very successful. Under the influence of drink, he forgot the heavy thoughts that had only just now pressed upon his brain wearily; he forgot everything; he had long since broken his promise, and was now in no fit state for reflection. He even went so far as to shake Hargreaves by the hand, and tell him he was a "jolly good fellow." Had he known the strange thoughts which were flitting about in the ex-inkeeper's brain, he would, perhaps, have come to a very different conclusion.

So the evening passed on, and as the small hours of the morning were reached, most of the company were completely incapacitated from reaching their bed-rooms.

Hargreaves was an exception, and seeing that Geoffrey was worse than the others, he volunteered to help him up to his bed-room. This the drunken young man at once agreed to. The bed-room was reached, and the officious Hargreaves extended his kindness even to undressing his companion and seeing him safe into bed. In a few moments, Geoffrey was sound asleep, and then Sam Hargreaves suddenly turned curious about Geoffrey's wardrobe. He turned out his pockets, one after another, and very honestly replaced their contents; until he stumbled upon a bundle of accounts. He examined them, and took out one which purported to be a claim upon Sankey & Co., Derby, for the sum of three hundred and fifty pounds. Hargreaves seemed to reflect a moment, only a moment. He then folded up this account, put it in his own pocket, and abstracted a memorandum, signed in good bold characters—"Geoffrey Wallis." These matters arranged, he left the room, whilst the son of his old master was asleep and unconscious of the trouble that was being brewed for him.

In the morning, to Geoffrey's surprise, Sam Hargreaves knocked at his bedroom-door, and asked if he could admit him for a few moments' conference.

"Certainly," said Geoffrey, rather reluctantly.
"What do you want?"

"I heard you say you were in trouble, last night.
How much are you short?"

"I don't know that you have any right to ask me
that question?"

"Mr. Wallis, do your present employers know your
antecedents? I think not. It is painful to me to refer
to this; therefore, best answer me, and let us converse
together in an amicable spirit. I think it will suit
your purpose better."

Did Geoffrey remember that ominous conversation
on the road from Mossgrave, when he was not much
younger than at present? Did he remember how this
friend had tempted him before, and did he not fancy
that the same bad spirit was tracking him down again?

"You said you were £400 short, did you not?"
"I am. Oh God; why do you remind of this?
Heaven help me!"

"Do you know the consequences of a discovery like
this? Loss of situation, of character, of livelihood, of
home, of happiness. It *must* be discovered sooner or
later!"

"I know, I know. The thought is maddening me.
Why talk to me of it?"

"To find a remedy for you, if I can."
At this precise moment, a commercial gentleman,
who had retired early on the previous evening, paused
at the half open door, and listened.

"A remedy!" said Geoffrey. "There is no remedy
for my own folly."

"Yes; you remember, so do I, your aptitude for
imitating signatures."

"Ah! I knew something of the kind of advice you
would give me."

"Listen! It is useless to talk nonsense now. It
must rest with you as to whether you will make a last
effort to secure your credit."

"You can make your proposition, and let it be done
as soon as possible."

"You can well imitate your brother Alfred's signa-
ture. He is now the master of thousands, and a forged
cheque for £500, will not ruin him."

"Rob my brother Alfred? Never! No, no; I am
bad enough, but not so bad as that."

"Well, you can do as you like; but you *must* do

something, or be completely ruined. I will help you out by presenting the cheque, and will even procure you a blank cheque-book from the Longford bank."

"Out with you ! Leave me, if you would not drive me to worse than madness. You have tempted me before, you tempt me now."

"Well, you will be in Derby soon. I shall also be there at J——'s Hotel, and you can then tell me what you mean to do. My price for this small job will be £50. Not at all exorbitant, all things considered."

The listener at the door, moved away. He was so altered, that I question if Geoffrey could have recognised in him his former friend Wilson, now travelling as the representative of his brother Alfred.

Hargreaves came down to the commercial room, but Wilson had taken his place in a coach which left the inn at an early hour. When Geoffrey came down, Hargreaves bade him "good morning" with a most unconcerned and placid countenance, and they conversed before the others, upon all sorts of commonplace topics.

In two days after, Geoffrey left to pursue his journey, but would hold no further conversation with Hargreaves, relative to the proposition made by the latter.

That very evening, some miles away from them, Wilson wrote to his employer, and narrated all he had heard. He concluded Geoffrey was in trouble, he had heard that he drank hard, and was addicted to betting and gambling : that he had judged it best, for special reasons, not to discover himself ; and then gave an account of the fraud which was in all likelihood soon to be perpetrated upon him.

Wilson then counselled, that the paying cashiers at the Longford bank should be forewarned, and that the presenter of the forged cheque, should at once be arrested. They could then decide upon what further steps should be taken in the matter.

CHAPTER XIII.

Blind Goddess Fortune, with her fickle changing wheel
Doth many a joy unfold, and many a doom doth seal ;
For here she plungeth affluence in grief ;
And there unto the veriest poor, brings rich relief.

" Speak man ! If thou must talk of ill.
Then speak it out, speak with a will ;
This silence stabs me ; loose thy recreant tongue,
And give the knowledge which is thine, to me."

BOB ROLLINSON still continued as errand boy in the office of Bangem, Slashy and Co. Poor lad, all his mental capabilities seemed gone, but at times there would flash from his brain a more intelligent thought than ordinary, giving at least some hope for the future.

His duties were not of a heavy kind, consisting only of running such errands as might be undertaken by one of his limited intellect. The rest of the messengers took a delight in making fun of him. He bore it all very good-naturedly—all except one phase of their banter. At dinner-time, many would stay and eat a hasty meal on the premises, ordering in pints of ale or beer from a neighbouring inn. As a standing joke, they would invariably ask the poor idiot to drink; but poor Bob, whose intellect and perception was dull and clouded in all other respects, was in this matter very firm and decided.

" Poor Bob does'nt want that stuff. It killed poor Bob's father, and made poor Bob unable to think ! think ! think !" and the poor lad put his emaciated hand to his forehead.

" I say, Wiggles, what's the news in the paper, eh ? You're always so fond of looking at that second column of the *Times*. One would think you expected an old granny to die and leave you all she was worth." This from one workman to another.

" Why, here's a fortune for our friend Bob, I doubt not, ha ! ha ! Listen to what it says. Now, then, Bob."

" To any of the name of Rollinson.—Persons who can give information as to the whereabouts of one Robert Rollinson, or anybody connected with him as relatives, (the said Robert Rollinson lately residing at S—), will be handsomely rewarded by applying to John Garnett, Esq., Solicitor, Inner Temple. The relative or relatives, if any, will hear of something greatly to their advantage, by applying personally, at once."

" S— ! Bob knows S—, and Bob's name is Rollinson, you know, ain't it ? "

" Of course, and I should'nt wonder if you come into a thousand a year, and a grand estate, Robert ; I should apply at once, ha ! ha ! "

" Will you lend me the newspaper ? I can shew it to the Duke. He will tell poor Bob what he thinks of it. *He* never jokes daft Bobbie ! "

" Oh, dear, yes. We'll lend you the newspaper. Mind you pay us with a crisp five hundred pounder when you come into your estates, will you ? "

" Bob does'nt know what you mean."

The poor lad took the newspaper, and flew to the distant part of the building where he knew he should find the Duke. He at once, without saying a word, pointed to the advertisement, and saw the Duke turn pale as marble, remaining motionless as a statue.

" Well, well, what did you want with me ? " he at last gasped with laboured utterance.

" My name's Bob—Bob Rollinson—and I once lived at S——. Bob wants to know if the newspaper men have anything to do with him."

It would have formed a study to a painter, had he been able to gaze on the features of the Duke, once the unconquered inebrate, now a sober, steady, hard-working packer. His lips quivered, and he had to wipe the moisture from his forehead, as he said :—

" You, you are Robert Rollinson ! and did I bring this upon you ; did I cause this mental imbecility to come upon you ; did I doom you to a life of idiotcy. Shall I ever forgive myself ? Even now when I find one of my lost children restored to me ? " He wept a passionate flood of tears.

" Bob does'nt know what you mean ! Did you read the newspaper ? "

" Yes ! yes ! But don't you know me " Oh, do not stare at me with that vacant look, or I shall be worse than mad."

" Bob wants to think, here, high up in his head. But you see, he can't. He believes there's something to think with, but when he tries, he finds nothing, nothing ! "

" Robert ! look up, I am your long-lost FATHER ! "

Father ! At that magical word, the veil which had screened the chambers of thought, seemed all at once to be removed. Bob looked vacant only for an instant, he stared at the speaker, looked at him again, threw his arms around the neck of his parent, and cried bitterly.

" Now I shall have some one to care for me. Dear, dear father ! All my senses have returned to me.

I wanted but you, and have found you. Ah! if we only had my poor mother here again, we should be happy indeed."

"Hush Bob. I know what I did in her case. I feel and have constantly felt like a second Cain. But God helping me, I will now make some atonement."

"Did'nt I bring a newspaper to you, just now, dear father?"

"You did, and we will ask permission to go at once, and see what it all means."

They got the permission, and we can soon tell the reader what it meant. A rich brother, resident in India, had left the Rollinsons all his wealth, and they were now masters of some thousands per annum. This was the packer's comment.

"God gives me another chance of doing good, and by His help and guidance, I will endeavour faithfully to discharge the second trust reposed in me."

"Amen! father; we have learned a lesson in the school of a bitter experience, and we will now, as we have the power, begin a new existence."

Of course, Messrs. Bangem, Slashy and Co., were made acquainted with this sudden downfall of fortune, and were good-natured enough to congratulate both father and son, whilst the workmen who had sneered at poor Bob, were rather chagrined to find that their jokes had become realities.

In the course of the evening, letters came to the office of Hoare and Co., as usual. Three of them were of the utmost importance to the firm, and I hope will be found so to my reader. I shall here transcribe them at length. Number one ran as follows:

Derby, Cross Street Works.

Messrs. Hoare and Co.

Gentlemen—It is our painful duty to inform you that a person professing to represent you, is trying to cheat you and your customers by getting the latter to pay accounts which have been previously liquidated by them. On Monday last, a gentlemanly traveller, your new representative, called upon us, got our cheque for your account of £350, took our order, and left, as we are informed, by the night mail. On Wednesday, another gentleman, professing also to come from you, demanded the amount of account again. Of course we did not hesitate about giving him into custody, much as he expostulated, and on shewing him the signature of your representative, "Geoffrey Wallis" he laughed, and said it was a forgery. The man who had the money is a thick set gentlemanly fellow. The one who is in custody, is a young man of a rather prepossessing exterior, and certainly the papers in his desk corroborate the statement made by him, that he, and he alone, represents you on our ground. Still he must be a swindler, and no doubt you will prosecute him. We await your reply, and remain, &c., SANKEY & Co.

Number two was an equally startling note, and ran as follows:

Gentlemen—I beg to inform you, from information undoubtedly reliable, that a forged cheque for £500, was yesterday presented at the Longford Bank. It was forged by a man now in your employ—Geoffrey Wallis—upon his brother Alfred, to make up a deficiency in his journey accounts. The cheque was inadvertently paid, and all trace of the receiver of the cash has been lost. I leave you to guess whether it is right that a house like yours, should have such a representative. The cheque can be seen any time at the Longford bank, and the forgery will be at once apparent. Yours, &c.,

ANONYMOUS.

The handwriting was cramped, hard and heavy. It emanated from Sam Hargreaves. Not content with inveigling Geoffrey into a crime, he had himself made off with all the spoils, and then added to the injury by anonymously accusing the one he had so deeply wronged. He had not met Geoffrey at Derby as proposed, but had himself committed the forgery on Alfred Wallis.

Number three was from the landlord of the Rose and Crown, Derby.

Gentlemen.—Your new representative, Mr. Geoffrey Wallis, has been more or less intoxicated ever since he arrived at this hotel. His bill for wines &c., is a heavy one, and you will perhaps be aware that he is now in Derby gaol, on a charge of trying to obtain money under false pretences. His pattern boxes are here, and on your remitting me the sum of £14 8s. 8d., as per enclosed bill, I will at once forward them to your address.

" Damnation ! " said Hoare. " I trusted that fellow and I have been deceived."

" Prosecute him if there is any deficiency," said Co. number one.

" Give him no quarter if he has abused his trust," said number two.

" You must go down to Derby by the express," said Hoare to number one.

" Right sir ! what am I to do when I get there ?"

" Pay that confounded wine bill, and send back our patterns. Then balance Wallis's books, and report the amount of deficit. We shall then prosecute him for breach of trust. Go forward to Longford, ask to see that forgery, convince yourself that it *is* one, and then return back to London as quickly as may be."

Co. number one made what preparations were necessary.

" Go to Bangem's, tell them what has happened, and ask some one to break the news gently to his wife at Hope Cottage. She's far too good for him, and at least deserves some little consideration at our hands." This to Co. number two.

The latter gentleman at once went about his errand, and the consternation was as great in the office of Bangem, Slashy and Co., as it was at that of Messrs. Hoare.

Mr. Rollinson burst into tears. He could foresee the grief this would bring to the home where he had hitherto found peace and quiet, and we need scarcely say that he undertook the sad task of acquainting the young wife with her husband's disgrace.

"Father! be very careful how you do it. She was always kind to me," said Bob.

"I will, my boy. Those who were kind to you, have a claim upon me always."

And so they bent their footsteps towards Hope Cottage. But how little the title applied to that pretty little building now! The thick cloud of misfortune and trial was soon to burst over it in all its strength and fury. The day of peace was fast waning, and the night of despair loomed like an evil genius, in the future. The cry of gladness was to give place to the wail of grief; the love-light in that young wife's eyes, would be dimmed by bitter tears.

It was indeed a neat little cottage, at the outskirts of the metropolis. It had its own little garden-plot, and was an independent residence nestling among its own flower-beds and neatly gravelled walks.

Jessie was walking about the garden, with a happy and contented face. She was playing with Alick, her only child. Tossing the fat, chubby, laughing little fellow into the air, and catching him again with a scream of delight on both sides. As Rollinson neared them, and nodded in his usual style, he mentally thought what a revulsion of feelings there would soon be, and he held an argument with himself as to whether he ought to disturb those happy moments or not. But he saw that it would have to be done eventually, and if not by him, would perhaps be communicated by some injudicious meddler.

"Will you come into the parlour a moment, Mrs. Wallis? I have something to tell you which I think you ought to know."

In a moment the smile of happiness left the face of Jessie. She knew some news that would be painful awaited her. Rollinson was a bad dissembler, and the story he had to tell was written in his countenance.

"Well, now, quick, Rollinson. What is this news?"

"Yes, well, that's just what I'm going to tell you, only you *must* be patient."

"It is about Geoffrey? I'm sure it is. Has anything happened him?"

"That's what I call the question direct!"

"Do not trifle with me, Rollinson. You want to tell your news cautiously, I see. But this suspense will only increase the pain."

"Well then, you must know that—pardon me, Mrs. Wallis, that *I* should have to tell you, but better me than anybody else."

"I'll pardon you anything, only tell me at once. You are killing me. Oh, speak!"

"Geoffrey has been arrested on a charge of trying to obtain money under false pretences."

Jessie did not faint, nor shriek, nor betray any sign of emotion, save a face which was deadly pale. Her eyes glistened, but they seemed hot and dry, whilst in an instant her lips were rigid and parched.

"But it is not true! No, no, no! It is a lie. My Geoffrey would never do that. My husband, the father of this child. No, Rollinson, it is false, I know it is."

"I believe so too, I am sure of it!"

"Bless you, old friend for those words. You would not say so without cause, I know."

"Still, I must pain you still further. He has committed a forgery, a forgery of which I am sorry to say there can be little doubt. It is upon his own brother, and the amount is a large one, no less a sum than £500."

This time the young wife's fortitude gave way, and she instantly fell senseless into the arms of the old man.

"Quick, Bob! get some water, she'll soon recover."

In a few moments, she opened her eyes, dreamily, wearily, anxiously, as it seemed.

"What were you speaking of Rollinson? Ah! I remember now."

The poor heartbroken wife burst into a long and passionate flood of tears.

"Rollinson! Geoffrey must have been drinking; he would never have done this otherwise."

"He *had* been drinking it appears! The hotel proprietor has sent in a bill for wine supplied to Geoffrey, has sent it to his employers, Hoare and Co., as they won't deliver up the sample cases without it is liquidated."

Jessie did not seem to hear him. Her brain was in a whirl. She was trying to arrange a plan of procedure, to sort the crude thoughts, and *act* at once.

"Rollinson, I must go to him! I must seek him out!"

There is no other way for it. I may save him from further disgrace, and I must try. Oh, Geoffrey! Geoffrey! had you taken my advice, I'm sure all this would never have occurred."

"I would not advise you to take this step, Mrs. Wallis. He will return to you, when all is over. His brother will never prosecute him, I feel assured."

"Come back to me! Rollinson, you do not know my husband. He will never return to me after his disgrace. I know it, I feel it! Unless I am there to save him, he will sink lower and lower. Oh! I *must* go."

"God forbid that I should stop you then, if that be your opinion. Go, Mrs. Wallis, by all means, and I for one, will pray for your complete success."

"I know you will, Rollinson, and be very sure that until I find him, I will never return to this home. It would be wretched, it would be desolate!"

"Do not make any rash vow, mam. You will be glad enough to come to your own home, whether you find your husband reclaimable or not."

"I shall never return without him! Either my husband must be with me, or I have done with the cottage for ever."

"Then what arrangements do you propose making? You cannot shut up the house and discharge your servant."

"No, I shall not do that. Besides, this is your home, Rollinson, and that of your son. You need not change your residence. I shall take all the money I can with me; Alick, of course must go with me, and if necessary I will write you as to what you must do further."

It was apparent to Rollinson that Jessie had nerved herself for the trials which he foresaw for her, otherwise, she could not have made these arrangements so quietly, so calmly, with almost an unmoved countenance. It was the courage of despair.

But twenty four hours elapsed, ere the anxious wife and mother was on her way to Derby. The train sped along the iron rails, but every revolution of the wheels only brought the anxious passenger nearer to disappointment.

With aching heart, and face burning with shame, as she thought of her errand, she applied at the Derby Gaol to see Geoffrey Wallis.

"He was discharged from custody yesterday evening."

"Thank God! He was found innocent then, was he not?" she eagerly enquired.

"Innocent of one charge, but as to the forgery, we can't say. It looks very ugly against him, but as no one appeared to prosecute, we couldn't detain him, of course. Hoare's chap said he was "wanted" by their firm, but Wallis was too sharp for him, and left Derby by the mail train."

"Left! and you do not know for what part? Oh please give me all the information you can. I am his wife, and if you are a husband, you may easily judge of my anxiety."

"Well mum, I can't tell you much, however inclined I might be. Hoare's man telegraphed for him to be stopped at Rugby, but the train was searched to no purpose. He was not found."

"And can you guess where he is—where he is likely to be?"

"Well, guessing wouldn't be of much use, because I might send you wrong. One thing's certain, he dare'n't stop in England. Hoare's man wants him for breach of trust, then there's the other count for forgery, so that I should say he'll go to the continent as soon as he can get."

"The continent! Leave England! Surely, surely, he would not do that, would never desert his wife, child, and home without leaving directions or intelligence of his movements?"

"He'd be silly if he didn't, asking your pardon mum."

"Then where do you think it likely he has gone to? I am so sorry to trouble you."

"Paris, mum. They all go to Paris, somehow. The Frenchmen send their rogues to London, and we send ours to Paris. Exchange is no robbery, they say."

"Man! Can you joke a wife on the subject of her husband's disgrace. And you dare call him a rogue. You have not proven it, yet."

"I ask your pardon, mum. But it looks very likely. Nevertheless and notwithstanding, I don't wish to hurt your feelings. I can sympathize with you."

"Thank you! Please accept this!"

And slipping half-a-crown into the man's hand, the disconsolate wife left the massive door of Derby Gaol, and bent her steps in any direction—she knew not where to—her brain was full of plans, her eyes swam with hot tears, her heart was heavy, very heavy with sorrow. She strained little Alick to her breast, and silently prayed God to help and sustain her.

CHAPTER XIV.

"Is this the village where I passed my quiet youth,
And this the old church-yard I loved so well?
And here the tombstones, full of sadd'ning truth,
As they their solemn stories tell."

"Now for Reform ! we'll change the blackened scene,
Make brighter coloured pictures take its place ;
We'll strive for good, with appetite so keen,
That each shall try to head the glorious race."

Two years have elapsed since the occurrence of events mentioned in our last chapter, and an eventful two years it was to some of the actors in our little drama. The Rollinson's had come into possession of their new property, and the first thing they did was to redeem the old estate. "Squire Rollinson" again resided upon his own lands, and bore the well known title. "Hope Cottage" had been given up and its furniture sold. About six months after Jessie left London, Rollinson received a note from Paris. It had no address at its head, and was simply a letter of instructions from Mrs. Wallis, to sell the household furniture, and remit the amount to her by means of "the Post Office, Paris."

He had acted upon his instructions, and was possessed of no other information relative to Mr. and Mrs. Wallis, than that they were in Paris, how living, or how they sustained themselves, he knew not, and as he warded off all curious enquirers, so he was very careful never to introduce their names unless he saw a special occasion for so doing. Of course, most of the inhabitants of S—— were quite unaware that the great Squire, had had any connection with Geoffrey Wallis or his wife. Amongst the number were Alfred's household, Andrew Dean and others.

S—— was a very different little place to what the opening chapter of our tale found it. Many who had taken a prominent part in the fight against the "teetotal customs" were among the dead. Alas ! many of them proved by their death, how wrong had been their opposition in life. That which they had opposed, might have saved them. Reader ! can you not remember instances of this kind ? Your life must have been either a very short, or a very secluded one, if you cannot remember actual proofs of the damning effects of drink. We can, yes by scores and hundreds, some of such a terrific character that they beggar all descrip-

tion. Let us give you one, a mere sketch of the close of life for Harry Harland.

You will not have forgotten him, we hope. He was one of Geoffrey's first tempters. He it was who was instrumental in getting him to join the "free and easy" meetings at Longford. Well, see how awfully came the day of retribution. He became an habitual drunkard, had been so for years before he died. One night he came home, and drunk and *soddened* with alcohol as he was, lay down by the dying embers of a fire. In the morning his body was found, charred and black. His breath full of inflammable matter had caught fire, and this victim of drink, died of combustion, the skin came off from his bones in large flakes, and they buried the loathsome body out of sight as soon as decency would allow them. He was buried in S—— churchyard, and a weeping heartbroken mother placed a plain stone at the grave's head. It only bore his name and a short comment. "Harry Harland, aged 28, mourned for by a widowed, childless mother."

Ah ! How these mothers can bear with our faults, suffer anguish of mind and pain of the body through our sins and shortcomings. Let us offend even beyond seventy times and seven, yet will their large hearts love on, and love ever. Disgrace may overtake us, and the black mantle of death shroud us, covered with ignominy and infamy ; yet those loving fingers will smooth the trappings of our long slumber ; those eyes will still pour forth their tribute of affection, their heart still swell with maternal solicitude.

Another burial had taken place at S—— church. A coffin had been brought to the village from London. It was met by the mourning friends of the deceased young man, and buried not far from the grave of Harry Harland. He had been killed in a London gin-shop brawl, and his name is not unfamiliar to you—Jack Jenkins.

Others, unknown by name to my reader, had found their resting-place. Many who had uttered loud complaints against "forcing a man to be a teetotaler," had to learn, to their bitter cost, that a forced life of morality and abstinence is at any rate better than the death of a drunkard.

On entering S——, the first circumstance which struck the visitor, was the air of content and quietness which pervaded it. All the houses appeared neat and

clean ; there were no slatternly, idle wives to be seen lounging about, and no truant workmen visible with a short pipe and a mug of ale. "Black monday" was now a thing of the past, and somehow had become as cheerful as any other day. Each cottage belonging to the Wallis-factory workmen, had its own garden-plot, and when evening came, the robust father and his healthy children might be seen either weeding, or planting, or performing some other gardening operation, whilst the tidy wife prepared a substantial supper. Or if they were not to be seen at these occupations, you might note them as they trudged (father and children) to a large and commodious building, which bore over its door the inscription, "The Workman's Temperance Hall." There the children could have night education, whilst the father sipped his cup of coffee, chatted to his fellow-workman, or read "The Times." The former slave had liberated himself, and was now *a man* in every acceptation of the term. The village had been purified, and the purifiers were Alfred Wallis, Andrew Dean, Jenny Wallis and another. That other was Mrs. Hargreaves. Nurse had often said she would put up the first shutter, and at last, without any solicitation, she had done so. "*The Honest Man*" was closed, and Nurse emphatically said, "she washed her hands of the dirty trade."

She was rewarded by being at once inducted as housekeeper at "Rose Cottage," and several workmen and their wives called to thank her for her self-denial.

"No self-denial, I can tell you. I'se well rid on it. So would you be, if you'd had the botheration with it that I had. Ah ! it's a nice trade ; so respectable, and sich nice folks for your customers ! Bless 'em, they wanted more soap and water than drink ! Then, besides all that, the law takes care of you so well. You must n't do this, and must n't do that, unless you wants to be fined. You must open only when you're ordered, and shut not a minute later than you're told. You're obliged to serve the dirtiest fellow that calls for his "pot." The law takes great care of you. There's about three hundred laws relating to that there trade, and woe to anybody that breaks one of 'em. Why do n't they take care of any other tradesman, the same way ? I suppose they do n't *need* so much care. Ah ! it's a nice trade, my men, and you that keeps out of it won't do amiss!"

"But you didn't use to think so, Mrs. Hargreaves."

"Well, I suppose folks can repent, can't they, and turn from the error of their ways? I've done so, and who's to blame me, I should like to know?"

"Nobody. On the contrary, we praise you and thank you for it."

How the other two public-houses were shut up in S_____, was no mystery to anybody. A meeting of all the inhabitants was convened by Alfred and Andrew. A proposal was made that if two-thirds of the people present voted against supporting the public-houses, the remainder should abide by the majority's decision, and discountenance them also. The result was that the pair of inns shut up voluntarily; they were quietly snuffed out of being, and from that time forth, the village became a different place. Prosperity supplanted want and indigence. Jenny Wallis visited those homes where she thought a kindly hint would not be out of place, and encouraged those who had already "made their own threshholds clean." Alfred had never grown weary in the work of first reforming the habits of his own workmen. True to his creed, to his resolves, and to his own sense of right, he had urged forward the good work, and a blessed result had followed. Many who had once passed their Sundays in idleness, and in a slovenly, sinful disregard of its sanctity, now thought themselves respectable enough to mix with the best of the churchgoers; it is wonderful, too, how soon sober respectability is taken by the hand, recognised and rewarded. It soon became felt that their former lives were as the black pages of their existence, never to be recurred to except with regret. We can personally bear testimony that the sober habits of these workmen brought many of them to the footstool of Christ Jesus, where they sued for a safer and more permanent safeguard to their good resolutions, than a mere pledge can confer.

As has before been intimated, the villagers of S_____, now had their regular musical gatherings, their discussion-classes and debating society: there was a "Girls' Mutual Improvement Class," and "The Mother's Council," with many other schemes for securing their comfort, emanating from themselves or from Andrew Dean and Alfred Wallis.

Could you expect less? Had not this solitary village witnessed enough lessons from the effects of

intoxicating liquors. Ah! too many. But yet another had recently been added to their list. The priest, who, to his disgrace, went through the matrimonial service on behalf of Geoffrey and Jessie, whilst partially inebriated, had been discharged from his office by the bishop of his diocese. The man had entered his pulpit whilst completely intoxicated, and whilst endeavouring to preach his sermon, fell down through stupefaction. Reader! no other comment than that this is a fact, can be necessary.

There was a dinner-party at Rose Cottage on the day when we again ask the reader to cross its threshold. It was the first that had been given for years. Their mother's imbecility, their father's death, the disgrace of their brother, (of whom no tidings whatever could be learnt,) all contributed to weigh down the spirits of Alfred and his sister; but upon this occasion, by special advice from Wilson, now their representative, they had determined to throw open their doors to Squire Rollinson and his son Robert; Mr., Mrs. and Miss Debenham—the new minister and his family; Andrew Dean, of course, with a very nice note dispatched expressly to him by Jenny herself; "our Mr. Wilson;" and one or two who are of no importance to our narrative or our reader.

Wilson was shewn into the drawing-room some time before the arrival of the others, but not too early to find Mr. Andrew Dean, who sat by Jenny's side very composedly, and very much at home.

"Well, Wilson, have you heard any tidings since Wednesday?" said Andrew.

"No, sir, I wish I had, for all our sakes, yours more especially."

Jenny blushed, for she knew that Wilson was aware of her compact with Andrew.

"I cannot bear the suspense much longer. I have had this duty upon my mind, and it daily weighs me down like an incubus. I *must* do something to find him out, and fulfill my dear father's wishes," said Alfred.

"My dear Alfred, what is this dinner for, but to see whether we can extract any information from Mr. Rollinson relative to poor Geoffrey," said Jenny.

"Geoffrey! Geoffrey! Who mentioned that name? Surely I once had a son, and they called him Geoffrey! I'm sure it was Geoffrey; but then I don't know. I

once could think and recollect ; but, alas ! no more thinking now ; it 's all over !" Poor Mrs. Wallis !

A shade passed across the faces of those who listened to this melancholy remark.

" I 'm sure Rollinson knows something as to their whereabouts. I 've ascertained that he sold the house and furniture for them, and I know that if he is asked, he cannot well refuse to give us their address. We must try him, however," said Wilson.

" He is no man if he refuse to give one brother the address of another. Robert will tell us, if his father refuse. Of that I am quite sure," said Andrew.

" You must not count too surely upon that. You forget that he has now recovered his senses, and if there is a reason for concealment, he will be equally on the alert. But see, here come the Debenhams, and, following after, the Rollinsons," said Wilson.

Mr. and Mrs. Debenham seemed an easy-going, very cosy, very comfortable, very fat couple ; whilst their daughter Milly wore the appearance of a modest and refined young lady. The latter had already done much good in the village, Jenny and her having often met whilst in the pursuit of their various acts of charity. Report said that if Alfred Wallis had a preference, Milly Debenham was likely to be the one. These were cautious terms, but quite justifiable ; for Milly and her parents were rigid abstainers, and upon strict principle ; they considered they ought neither to " eat meat nor drink strong drink, if, by so doing, my brother stumbleth or is made weak." So that in principles, Milly would suit Alfred. As to personal appearance, she was sufficiently attractive in that way, whilst her manners and conversation were such as would well grace the drawing-room of Rose Cottage.

The greetings were over, the ladies had bestowed their walking wrappers in various mysterious corners, and the select party had " settled down " previous to dinner. It was presently announced, and the only noteworthy circumstance was that every glass was filled with clear water, and every diner seemed to enjoy it.

" Well, Mr. Dean, I have to give you a lecture," said Milly.

" What a calamity ! Pray, my dear madam, make it as interesting as possible."

" Why, it is just this : since you have become sole

proprietor of that newspaper, you lash the follies of the good people of Longford and S—— most severely."

"Surely, my dear Miss Debenham, you would not have me be merciful in such cases?"

"I would have you temper your severity with mercy. I declare you spend your ink upon the most minute things, and I verily believe you tax your imagination for a good many of the wrongs you so much delight to expose. You cut us up severely."

"Pray, may I ask for an individual instance, my dear madam?"

Well, there's that —

"Now, my dear Milly, don't let us have a discussion on Andrew's newspaper articles. And further, I warn you that if you commence the attack, you will soon give up, worsted!" And I must say that Alfred looked very fatherly and very kind, when he tendered his advice.

"Very good. I will strike my colours. Ah! Here comes the newsboy with 'The Times.' There's a paper for you, if you like, Mr. Dean."

"Upon my honour, the inference is very complimentary, madam. Mrs. Hargreaves, would you kindly hand me that bottle of soda-water."

"Strange that you should mention the name of Hargreaves just as I was glancing at the same word in this terrible advertisement," said Milly.

"Advertisement! Pray read it, my dear madam." Andrew was too polite to request the newspaper at the lady's hands. But he guessed what was coming.

"Here it is, then, as you feel interested in the name. But I really think he is no relative of our respected friends."

£100 REWARD!

The above amount will be paid to any person or persons who can give any information as to the whereabouts of one Hargreaves. He is a thick-set man, and wore, when last seen, black coat and trousers, white waistcoat, blue tie, massive gold chain and white hat. He is wanted for several thefts, and the above amount will be paid to any person who can cause him to be taken. Application may be made to the Superintendent of Police, Bow Street.

Nurse Hargreaves gave one loud shriek, and fainted! Poor woman! She had hoped now to keep her respectability unsullied, and here were the indelible stains which would cling to it for ever. It was hard, certainly, and the poor woman sank under the thought.

This partially disturbed the company, and in the subsequent fuss, Alfred and Wilson called the elder

Rollinson on one side, whilst Andrew was left to amuse and entertain the ladies, if he could. Miss Debenham, full of fun, soon began firing her arrows again at our sturdy editor; but it was merely a question of give and take.

Whilst this bye-play was going on, the more important conversation relative to Geoffrey was taking place in an adjoining room.

"Mr. Rollinson, you will excuse me calling you upon one side, and for troubling you with a question or two, I am quite sure."

"Certainly, my dear sir. I shall be happy to answer you any questions I can."

"My brother Geoffrey! It is of him I would speak. When in London, you lodged with him. You knew something of his wife and child."

"I did know about them when in London, I must confess."

"And as you acted for Mrs. Wallis, in her absence from London, you must, as a consequence, have some idea where they are to be found now."

"I have. But I promised not to betray them. I speak candidly, you see."

"Mr. Rollinson, you have known the effects of drink. When I tell you that I desire to arrest my poor brother's downward progress, when I tell you it was my father's dying wish that I should seek him out and reclaim him, when I say that so far as money goes, no danger shall overtake Geoffrey in England, surely you will not now refuse to speak openly as to where he may be found."

"You have a son yourself, Mr. Rollinson. You would not have kept back so small a piece of information, if it would have saved him," said Wilson.

"Your arguments are overpowering. I love Geoffrey and his good wife. I'm quite satisfied with the promises you have given me, and I now will state all I know. The cash from the proceeds of the furniture sale I remitted to this address, 'Post-Office, Paris.' I have since heard from them, and they seem to occupy small apartments at No. 16, Rue Laroche."

"They! Then they are together, you believe?"

"I think so; but I am by no means certain."

"Wilson, I must go to Paris. There is no alternative. You must act for me to the best of your ability when I am absent. Dean will accompany me, if he can."

And so Mr. Rollinson was thanked, the interview terminated, the dinner-party broke up, Miss Debenham fired her last satire, Andrew heroically determined to go with Alfred, and a plan of procedure was at once determined upon.

CHAPTER XV.

"What pen can paint the blackened scene,
Or tell the tale of sin and woe?
For fiction pales before the truth;
But should we screen the facts—no, no!"

"Now for the Dover Express! Any more for Dover! Take your seats, gentlemen, take your seats!" The last few words of the railway official's speech were specially addressed to two gentlemen who had booked through to Paris. You will guess their names. Andrew Dean and Alfred Wallis.

"Have you told Simon about the luggage?" said Alfred, to his friend.

"All right, master; t' guard hez 'em in t' van wi' him," said Simon himself.

Simon was a man-servant engaged expressly for this journey, but with a promise of permanent employment if he "behaved" himself. He was fresh from Yorkshire, and retained all the unsophisticated manners and curious dialect generally ascribed to the agricultural portion of that country's population.

"Then we may make ourselves comfortable, I suppose?" said Andrew.

"Yes, as comfortable as we can under the circumstances," replied Alfred.

"I saw you looking very curiously at a box, just now, Alfred. Was there anything particular upon it? I know you are not generally of a prying disposition."

"Well, yes; the address upon that box was, '*Mons. Hargreaves, 5, Rue Peletier, a Paris.*'"

"And what of that?"

"Well, I am not certain, of course; but as *the Hargreaves* disappeared from England, and as it is just possible we may require him, I have noted the address in my pocket-book."

"Quite right, though it is very likely there may be more than one Monsieur Hargreaves in the French capital."

"Just so, I merely copied it, as we may *possibly* find it of use.

The giant locomotive shrieked and puffed, and puffed and shrieked. On it went, out from the station, past a wilderness of buildings, through green fields, snorting and gasping as it ran, till it finally gave a longer shriek than ever, and arrived at the Dover Terminus. A moiety of the passengers went on board the Calais packet; amongst the number were of course to be found Andrew, Alfred, and Simon the unsophisticated.

* * * * *

We have now to perform the melancholy duty of narrating the blackest portion of our story. The victims of drink do not rest on their oars, they either progress or retrograde, there is little standing still with them, and when the descent begins, it is rapid and certain.

Geoffrey Wallis had done precisely as the keeper at Derby gaol had predicted. Finding none to bar his progress, he had taken the last mail train for London. At Rugby, a policeman had looked through his compartment of the carriage, but finding no one to answer the telegraphic description, had slammed the door to, and gone away, much to the satisfaction of Geoffrey, who suspected that he was the cause of this search.

After staying but a few hours in London, he went on to Paris, nervous, restless, weary, dispirited and reckless. What cared he now as to his future? The past was so black that what was to come could scarcely redeem it. There was now nothing worth building up, and retaining, a character for. Such were his thoughts.

Arrived at Paris, he took decent lodgings with a widow lady, near the Barrier. He could speak French fluently, and so at once discarded his mother tongue. But what was he to do, how earn a livelihood? All the money in his possession did not amount to £10; yet, knowing this, he went to the nearest wine-shop, and speedily, in the drugged liquor, lost all recollection, and only revelled in the dissipation of the moment. Soon after, you might have heard him singing French patriotic songs, and, by-and-bye, forgetting that he was in Paris, he launched out with "Mourir pour la Patrie," and all in good time was quietly locked up by a gendarme, and taken care of for several days.

When he came out, it was not as a better man. He

had had time for thought, yet the leisure had not taught him a single lesson of good. He had strange aches at his heart, it felt heavy ; and once, as he thought of his deserted wife and child, of the disgrace he had brought upon them, his eyes filled ; but a fellow-prisoner, who thought he could speak English, soon caused him to forget this redeeming reflection.

"Ah ! Monsieur ! You do cry, as John Boole call him ; you do 'pipe your eye.' *Mais, pourquoi !* Let us for to be happy. *C'est le temps pour rire, mon ami !* Come, here is of '*le vin ordinaire.*' Drink ! Drink ! see, I shall shew to you. As Mister Boole would say, I give to you some toast, '*a votre libération.*'"

This toast was repeated so long as the "*vin*" would last, and as the day of his enlargement arrived, Geoffrey's ideas of "earning a living" had faded away, and the feelings which filled his bosom could be compared to nothing save those of a roving vagabond, who eats his breakfast without knowing or caring whence his dinner may come. He wandered through the streets of the French capital day after day, spiritless and almost weary of life. As long as money lasted, drinking continued ; it was little of solid food that he ate, and when he would occasionally return to the widow's, rest was impossible, for his brain was dull, yet painfully active ; incapable of healthy action, yet sufficiently quickened and alive as to cause misery by a consciousness of its uselessness. In the first grey light of returning day, he would wander out ; but if his reasoning faculties were strong enough, he choose those streets where he would be least likely of meeting any of the officers of the law. He feared them, for they had business with him if they only knew it. He hated them, too, because he was aware that no mercy would be shewn him, if once they had charge of him. So he avoided them ; but he could not dodge his conscience, it was too faithful a policeman to be easily got rid of. So he made himself incapable of feeling its pangs and reminders, deprived himself of the power to reason, and so levelled himself with the brute creation.

This life could not continue long. His money at length came to an end. Strange thoughts entered his head. He had already lost character and position, why should he now stop at anything ? Could he be worse than he was ? Could the past be made more

irredeemable than it was now? His desperation made him answer the last two thoughts in the negative, and a glass or two of neat brandy soon made him ready for anything.

The widow was his first victim. Whilst she was out, he robbed the poor woman of the earnings of many long years, in all, about £50, and immediately after, took away all that belonged to him, and engaged some poor lodgings in the Rue Laroche. Ah! reader, Geoffrey Wallis has now indeed sunk in your estimation; but he is destined to occupy a still lower position in your thoughts, for we write no fiction; we tell a true story, one by no means overdrawn or highly coloured.

One of the rooms in his lodgings in the Rue Laroche, overhung the river Seine, and as Geoffrey contemplated the deep and muddy water beneath, through the open casement, a thought, blacker than even the water itself, entered his head. It would be a speedy and certain death, if circumstances required it!

He brought out a brandy bottle, and drunk deeply. He was never without *that* "solace," now, and he applied this source of consolation repeatedly.

Some weeks after he had robbed the widow, Geoffrey was walking along one of the Boulevards, when his attention was arrested by the figure of a woman, leading a little boy by the hand. The boy might be four or five years old.

She entered a wine-shop, seemed to look about the place, and then came forth, saying to the pretty little child at her side:—

"He is not there, Alick! He is not there! How much longer must we seek for him? I am weary and footsore, and sick at heart!"

"Papa must be very naughty to make you seek him all about this big city?"

"Hush! my dear; you must not speak ill of your papa!"

"But I love you so much, mama, so very much, and so—and so I don't like anyone that makes you cry."

"Still, we must go on seeking. You are not tired, Alick?"

"Oh, no, mama. But why do you seek papa in these nasty shops? Won't he, perhaps, be in some of the other shops with nice things in the windows?"

"It is more likely that he will be where I am looking for him." Ah ! it cost you a bitter pang, Jessie, to say those words to your own little boy.

"But we only see nasty, dirty low people; would papa mix with them?"

"Hush, my dear. You are asking questions I must not answer."

Geoffrey Wallis had heard all this, had heard his ill-used wife conceal his faults from their only child; but he had already become too brutal to appreciate this good act, this charity, this nobility of heart. His sense of delicacy, his notions of refinement had long since been dulled, drowned and annihilated. A constant succession of drinking bouts will produce this in any man.

The only feeling which pervaded Geoffrey's breast was anger. There was no joy at recovering his good wife, he was annoyed that she had found him at all, and the more so, because her seeking for him *only* at the wine-shops, was a fact which at once conveyed its own comment.

A few steps further, and the patient wife discovered the one she sought, and, with a wild cry of joy, regardless of the curious stares which the passengers cast upon her, sprang into the arms of Geoffrey, and sobbed violently.

"Geoffrey ! Geoffrey ! I have sought for you wearily for weeks ; guess, then, how glad I am to see you. But do not leave us again ! I can forget everything but that you deserted us. Surely you had little confidence in my love ?"

"Bah ! The people are staring at us ! Doubtless they think this scene more suited to the boards of the 'Theatre Comique,' than the Boulevard. Come, let us away, and we will save this explosion of feeling for a private rehearsal."

Can my reader conceive the grief this heartless speech caused the poor faithful wife ? Can he imagine the humiliating thought which came over her mind, that she was no longer loved, that Geoffrey only thought her a burden which he must bear, perforce ?

"Where have you been lodging these few weeks ?"

"Geoffrey ! oh, dear Geoffrey, do not speak to me in those tones ! Surely you cannot love me, or you would speak more kindly."

"Have I not told you, madam, that we will reserve

these scenes for another time. You have not answered my question. Where have you been lodging?"

"In the *Rue Petit Chateau*; but *you* will live with me now? Geoffrey, I would rather die than be parted from you again!"

"That's very pretty! As my friend Cocoto would say, '*Messieurs, J'aime le sentiment.*' But to be serious. You will find my lodgings in the Rue Laroche, not at all to be compared with those of Little Castle Street. Had n't you better retain your own apartments, and I, mine?"

"No, no! Geoffrey. I mean what I say. If you, my husband, the only one who ought to love and cherish me, if you desert me, or put me from you again, life will have no charms for me, I should not care to live!"

"Very poetic, *petite*. Well, my rooms are at your service, but only upon one condition, which, if you should accept and then break, I know not what may become of my good resolutions as to our continuing together."

"Name it, Geoffrey. Ah, you are not the same man you used to be!"

"No, I am not," said he, savagely. "I am now a thief; I was one in England, I am one in Paris, else how could I exist? But, bah! Why do I talk thus? My one condition is, that you never question any act of mine, that my outgoings and incomings shall not be subject to your surveillance; that I hear no remonstrances or complaints, and that in short, you behave yourself as a good and obedient wife should do."

"Well," said Jessie, with a face blanched by terror and shame, "I will promise!"

"So far, so good. And here comes our good landlady, Madame Petitpour, into whose care I shall give you. The meeting is lucky; you can go with her, and I shall perhaps join you in the course of the evening."

"Are you my papa? Well, I do n't like you a bit; there!"

"Perhaps not. But it may be as well not to say so all at once, little gentleman. Madame Petitpour, you will take charge of my wife and child, and arrange household affairs to accommodate all of us for the future."

"Certainement! mais—I knew not monsieur was married?"

"I have that misfortune, you see. Farewell, for the present."

Could this be the Geoffrey of times past, thought Jessie, as she turned away. Could this be the man who had pleaded for her love, and now cast it from him so lightly. Could he be the being who had sworn to protect her, and now cared so very little as to what became of her? Poor Jessie! She knew the cause of this estrangement. She knew the enemy which stabbed both of them. She now saw how false had been her anticipations of being able to reform him. But reflection would do no good, and she must accept the decrees of fate with as much resignation as possible.

Geoffrey entered a wine-shop in the *Place de L'Unité* soon after leaving his wife and child; the first object which met his eye was the burly figure of Sam Hargreaves, smacking his lips over a bottle of Burgundy. Geoffrey went up to him.

"So, scoundrel! We have met at last, and we must settle the little debt which stands between us!" hissed Geoffrey from between his teeth.

"Well, how will you take it?" coolly replied Hargreaves. "You must be very careful what you say, *Monsieur Wallis*."

"How ought I to take it from one who has injured me as you have done? What should be done with the fiend who tempts me to commit a forgery, and then makes off with the proceeds, who personates me to get payment of money on behalf of my firm, and now has the unblushing impertinence to look me quietly in the face?"

"You're as good a speech-maker as ever. Well, what do you propose? Pistols for two and coffee for four, or what."

"I propose to break as many bones in your body as ——"

"As I will allow you to do. Precisely; that will be none."

"Then I will denounce you to the police. You are already 'wanted'; they are on your track. Have you seen the latest English news?"

And, with malicious satisfaction, Geoffrey pointed out the advertisement which the reader has already been made acquainted with, by means of Alfred's dinner-party.

"S' death! so you would betray me! Well, I can

retaliate by giving *you* up to justice. You are 'wanted' as well as Sam Hargreaves."

" You are wrong, for once. There is no prosecutor in my case. I know that the charges against me have been withdrawn by some means or other. Now, Samuel Hargreaves, either sign your name to what I write on this paper, or I at once call the *gendarmerie*. Oh, you need n't look round, you could n't escape!"

" And what is that you have written, pray? Curse you for your pains!"

" Thank you. This is it. Pay particular attention, please:—

" 'I, the undersigned Samuel Hargreaves, once of S—, now living in Paris, do hereby testify that I was the main instigator of Geoffrey Wallis committing the crimes known to his brother Alfred, and that his action in those matters was forced upon him by me. Further, that Geoffrey's deficiency in his accounts with Hoare and Co. were occasioned solely by his folly in gambling whilst under the influence of drink; also that I was the man who personated Geoffrey, and so swindled the Derby firm.'

" Now, sign that, and you can go where you please. I do n't know your address, and if I did, should not betray you. Come, here is the pen!"

With a deep-set scowl upon his brow, Hargreaves signed it, and then, seeing that he had been for once outwitted, left the place with a deep and bitter curse on his lips.

" The tide is in my favour for once," thought Geoffrey. " I do n't know what may turn up, and I care very little; but at any rate I have this paper, which shews I am not such a rogue as some people believe."

Did he remember his robbery of the widow, when he said that? And two years afterwards, had he looked back upon his acts, could he imagine that anyone would apply so mild a term as " rogue" to him?

He returned home to his wife, that wife who, spite of all, still loved him so dearly. But how did he repay her? Ah, let us at least spare the narration of that two years of ill-treatment, brutality and misery. Let us lift the last fold of the black curtain, and show you only what *must* be known.

* * * * *

" Well, Simon, have you succeeded in your mission?"

" Wah! I did my best! But it worn't mich after all.

I can't get along wi' them froggys nohow. I asked a fellow where Rew Scent Pleti—eh? wus, and he shooked his head, like a Chinese mandarin. I asked if he did n't speak French, and I'm blowed if he did n't answer me i' some sort o' lingo, Greek or summutter; so I was angry, an' I pushed my fist in his face, and told him he wur no gentleman, and so wi' that he chattered like a monkey, and then hooked it. 'Gare out! you precious frog-eater,' says I, 'you haint a gentleman, or else ye'd talk like a Christian, that you would!'

"Yes! you were n't very successful so far. Well, what next?"

"Well, then I met a soldier. Says I, 'Parlee woo sufferez woo?' And he larfed reight out at me. Says he, 'I speak Ingleese a little.' 'Oh!' says I, now you're a sensible chap, and right i' yer head. Can you tell me if there's such an a street as the Rew Scent Pleti, eh?' 'Yase, says he, 'ze vurst to ze right, and then ze second to ze left.' Says I, 'you're a gentleman, if you *are* a soldier.' Well, I went as he told me, and sure eniff t' street wur theer!"

"Thank you; that's all we wanted to know, Simon. You have done very well. Now, Andrew, have you any objection to accompanying me there?"

"Certainly not, Alfred. In this cause you may depend upon me I shall never fail you. We have sought uselessly for some weeks, but if your surmises and suspicions be correct, we have now some chance of success."

The two young men, followed by Simon, went in the direction of the Rue St. Peletier. They arrived at No. 5, and finding that "Monsieur Hargreaves" was at home, they entered his room without ceremony, whilst Simon stood at the door.

"Good morning, Monsieur Hargreaves. I claim the privilege of a former friend, and make bold to enter without invitation, you see," said Alfred.

"And d—d impertinent it is of you, too."

"No occasion for swearing, monsieur," said Andrew.

"And no occasion for *your* coming at all, I should think," said Hargreaves.

"Well, we thought two would be better than one where *you* were concerned."

"Did you? I may perhaps be a match for both!"

"We want you to give us the address of my brother Geoffrey."

"Do you? Well, then, you wo n't get it."

Hargreaves was afraid that if he gave it, Geoffrey might shew that paper, signed in the wine-shop, and so furnish them with clear evidence for a prosecution.

"Very good," said Alfred. "This newspaper offers £100 for your capture. Either at once give up the address, or I shall order in the *gendarmes*, and give you in charge."

"Not if I know it."

Hargreaves pushed Alfred and Andrew on one side, and, quick as lightning, threw open the door. He was just about to escape, but Simon extended his great brawny fist, and knocked him back sprawling on the floor.

"Come, Monsieur Hargreaves, you had better give the requisite information. Simon's fists are hard, our time is precious, and your safety very uncertain," said Andrew.

"Rue Laroche, near the Pont Neuf. D—n you!"

"But what number, man? We have been before to Rue Laroche, and cannot find him. Come, finish your information at once!"

"Number thirteen. Now, then, clear out. And as to you, Master Simon, I'll maul you to a jelly, young man."

"Oh! Thenk ye! First catch t' hare, before you can cook it, old boy."

* * * * *

We have spared our reader the narration of Jessie's trials during the two years she lived with Geoffrey at Paris. They had been years of unexampled misery. She had not conceived that fate could have reserved so stern a punishment for her. Geoffrey seemed to have ceased to care for her. He always returned home in a state of inebriation, and, according to her promise, she dare not remonstrate with him. He treated her with the greatest indifference, sometimes with cruelty, for he had struck her more than once.

How they existed she could not tell. Her own money, and that of Geoffrey, she was quite sure had been long since exhausted, yet still she never wanted for anything in the shape of sustenance or necessaries. The thought which kept continually crossing her mind relative to this, was almost too painful for utterance. She remembered what Geoffrey had said when they met two years ago; but though hitherto she had only thought it the utterance of a mind half-diseased, it came back now as a sickening truth, and her face blanched with fear, and then crimsoned with shame. The

thought grew and strengthened, it haunted her by night and by day, so that she knew no peace. At last, despite her promise, she felt she ought to know the truth.

Geoffrey returned home several hours after she had come to this determination. As usual, he was so intoxicated that he could barely walk steadily. Poor Jessie's face grew cloudy, the lines upon her brow were already deeply marked; little Alick stood looking at his drunken father. He was nearly old enough to be ashamed of the relationship.

"Geoffrey! Will you answer me a question, if I ask you one?"

"I thought I was free of questionings. No, you *won't* be answered, mam!"

"But I *must* ask you one, and what is more, I will."

"Take care! There is only *one* will here, and that one is mine!"

"Come what may, I must ask you. Where do you get the money which supports us? I care not for your frown, you must answer me."

"Do n't you care, you'll *have* to do. As to the money, that's my business, and if you ask the question again, I may answer you as you will not like."

Geoffrey's face wore a fiendish expression, and no murderer's acts could have conjured up a more deadly gaze than he cast upon his loving wife.

"I ask you again—no, no, Geoffrey, do not strike me, do not!"

"Hold your noise, then. Keep that enquiring tongue of yours from wagging!"

"I cannot, and I *will* ask you once more, where do you get the money?"

"Take *that* for an answer!" said the brutal husband, as he struck poor Jessie a blow upon the temple with his fist.

"Oh, father! father! do not strike mother! You are a brute if you do!"

In an instant, without thought, the inhuman man raised his hand again, and struck the little boy a blow which stretched him lifeless.

"Alick! Alick! my dear child!" shrieked Jessie.

"Now, madam, perhaps you will repeat the question you want answered?"

"I have no need. Brute! You have killed your own child! I know you now; I could easily have foreseen that the *thief* would stop at nothing."

The anxious mother was changed in an instant : the prostrate body of her dearly-loved child aroused all her passions, and she glared at her husband like a tigress. He was a very demon for the instant, and spoke as such.

"Have a care, madam ! You see the open casement ? I should not have much hesitation in throwing you to the fishes if you goad me on !"

"Aye, do, Geoffrey Wallis, I should at any rate be in honest company, and I would prefer that, to a drunken husband, who is one of the light-fingered gentry."

Quick as thought, Wallis raised his wife in his arms, she was a mere child in his powerful grasp. Open flew the casement, and Geoffrey Wallis, though his wife was shrieking, and imploring mercy, prepared to throw her into the waters of the Seine.

"Now, then, have your way. Fraternize with fishes ; you will never more trouble me with questions!"

The body of Jessie was just over the water, Geoffrey was about to leave go his hold, when a strong arm caught his wife, whilst another held him fiercely against the wall.

"So, Geoffrey Wallis, you would be a murderer ?"

Geoffrey stared at his interrogator, as if he had only just recognised him, but, as he did so, he partially awoke from the lethargy which his potations had brought upon him.

"Do you not remember your brother ? This must be the last scene of your present course of life. Awake, man ! Do you comprehend that you would have been a murderer by now, if you had had your own way ?"

"A murderer ! a murderer ! No, surely not, surely not !"

"Yes," said Andrew Dean, who had just succeeded in recovering Jessie, and was now busied with poor Alick ; "yes ! he *is* one in reality. This boy is dead !"

"Dead !" shrieked Jessie. "Dead ! Oh, no ! no ! no ! Yes, it is too true. Then I cannot remain with that man ; never, never with the murderer of my child. No, Andrew, do not stop me, pray, I shall be safe. You will care for my poor boy. Oh, God, is this the fruit of my disobedience ?"

She rushed out of the house. Alfred and Andrew could not oppose her superhuman strength, and she tore away from them.

"Now, do you comprehend, brother? Your wife has deserted you, and you are the murderer of your own child!"

"No, no, it cannot be. I will see for myself. Alick! Alick! my poor boy, your father calls upon you. Oh, Alfred! If he be only spared to me, I will reform; I will, by God's help!"

He kissed the poor child, and endeavoured to recover him. The man who had been in a constant state of inebriation during two years, was sobered in an instant. As if to ask the fulfillment of Geoffrey's resolve, Alick at last gave signs of returning life. A physician was instantly sent for, and, in the course of a few hours, the medical man pronounced him to be out of danger.

"Now, Geoffrey, you made a resolve just now; but you have made others before which have been broken."

"I mean to keep this, Alfred. I do indeed. I don't know how I can stand and look you in the face, though, as I say it."

"Well, Geoffrey, you have tried to injure me, but you have not done me much harm, after all. I may tell you that I intend you to return to England with me. I have arranged with Hoare and Co., having paid them the deficit. As to Hargreaves and the forgery, I consider him the forger, not you, and if the police discover him, he will meet with his reward, otherwise, I shall not trouble myself further about him. In return for this, I ask one favour of you."

"You have only to name it, Alfred. If you demanded my life you should have it."

"That you give yourself into my charge for one year, and that you promise, on your word of honour, to obey me in all things."

"I will; and I faithfully promise to do all you wish."

"Well done! Things are looking up, I see," said Andrew.

In less than a week, Alfred, Geoffrey, Andrew, Alick and Simon were on their way to S——, where they arrived in due course. The rejoicing over Geoffrey's return, we are bound to say, was greater than he deserved; but there was a set off. A room was prepared for Geoffrey. It had bars to the window, and a good strong lock to the door. Into this room, neatly and comfortably furnished as it was, Geoffrey was put soon after his arrival.

CHAPTER XVI.

“Last scene of all,
Which ends this strange, eventful history.”

“GEOFFREY, I’m sorry that your promised obedience to me must begin in such a way as this. But believe me, you will see my precautions are not unnecessary,” said Alfred.

“But surely you would not make a prisoner of me?”

“No, brother. But I promised our dear father, as he lay upon his death-bed, that I would find you out, though it cost me all the fortune he left me, that I would, if possible, rescue you from the destruction you were bringing upon yourself.”

“Do not remind me of it, Alfred; I will obey you in anything. But my wife, my dear Jessie, will you promise me to spare no pains to find her? I even feel now as though I were her murderer.”

“Believe me, Geoffrey, I will do all I can to restore her to you. But you can easily understand me when I say that I had rather give her back a new husband than the old one.”

“I know, I can comprehend you, and I will try to adopt your principles. But it will be a hard struggle, Alfred, for the appetite is still strong upon me, and you must help me to conquer it.”

“There is *another* who will give you more strength than ever can come from human aid, if you will only fervently and sincerely invoke His assistance.

“You are right, Alfred, and I will neglect no means by which I may gain His favour.”

“That’s right, Geoffrey! Depend upon it there are bright days in store for all of us yet. It only depends upon your own strong will.

What were those bars for, does my reader ask? You shall hear.

Alfred had rightly judged when he came to the conclusion that the appetite which was so strong for drink as to disregard morality, love of home and a wife’s affection, would indeed require very decided means to overcome it. For three days Geoffrey quietly and submissively read the books placed in his room for him. He wrote, ate, slept, but at last seemed to grow weary and restless. He could not write; reading, too, was out of the question, as he could not concentrate his attention upon the work. He seemed

to want something, but was, as yet, unwilling to confess that the "something" was his usual potations. He wished to conquer the desire, but the more he tried to cajole himself into the belief that this thirst was only transitory, the more did the vague feeling grow upon him. This, in addition to the gloomy thoughts which crowded upon him, made him feverish and excited. Occupation now was totally out of the question, and he traversed the length and breadth of his room with parched tongue, and a clouded brow. For the time being, his power of reflection left him. He forgot his promise, he forgot that he was now fighting for the victory, and would be for ever disgraced if he were worsted. He forgot the scene in Paris, and that he would have been a murderer, but for the interposition of his brother Alfred. Retrospection was lost to him, and the present gnawing desire to be free and gratify his inordinate longing for alcoholic stimulants, was the predominant feeling. He tried the lock of his door, would have wrenched it off, had not this possibility been foreseen and provided for. Then he pulled and tugged at the bars which guarded his window, all to no purpose. He sank into a chair, exhausted with his efforts, panting with loss of strength. All this had Alfred anticipated, and he spoke gently through an orifice in the door:—

"Geoffrey, now comes the question, shall you or your appetite be the victor?"

"Alfred! Do not deprive me of it; I will stay here as long as you like. You may imprison me for ever, if you choose; but do, for heaven's sake, do let me have a little brandy, do!" It was the pleading of insanity.

"No, brother, I mean you to win, in spite of yourself. Not a drop enters here by my consent. Take heart, Geoffrey; there's a bright future for you if you conquer, a dark one indeed if you were to succumb. Think of your wife, and think of the vow you made over the prostrate body of poor little Alick."

"But I tell you I shall go mad if I have nothing to drink."

"Then you must even do so, Geoffrey. Better that evil than one greater."

Alfred left the door; but a few moments after, he heard loud shrieks and the ravings of an insane mind, proceeding from the room. He instantly returned, and, from all the symptoms, thought his brother was

now in a fever. A doctor was instantly sent for, and the patient put under his care. For nearly seven weeks he raved about his past life, and was, to all intents and purposes, a madman. When he did recover, that longing desire was gone, and, in its place, the strong resolution of reason and common sense completed the victory. Still he was weak and quite unlike the athlète of former days.

* * * * *

"Please, sir; here be a Paris letter for you, sir. A queer-looking thing he be, too. He's nobbut like all t' Frenchmen generally. Excuse I, sir, but darn me if like them monsieurs; they're t' most uncivillest, owdaciousest set as ever I clapped my eyes on, that they be. Aye! you may laugh, Miss Jenny, but if you'd travelled i' furrin pairts as I've done, you would n't think it a laughin' matter, I can tell you. Ax parding, sir; anything else, sir?"

"No, that will do, Simon," said Alfred.

"Darned if I'd open that there letter, if I wur maister. Should n't wonder a bit if there wur summut went off as soon as t' seal wur brokken," and, with this sage reflection, Simon left the room.

As Alfred read the thin, crackly document, his face turned white, and almost inadvertently he said:—

"Why, this concerns Mrs. Hargreaves!"

"Does it, sir; pray what is it about? Has that husband of mine done anything more that's wrong? God forgive him; he's done enough mischief already."

"You are right, nurse. May God forgive him, as we all do."

"Why, what do you mean, Master Alfred? Surely, surely, something has happened."

"Yes. The letter is in French, nurse, so you cannot read it. Your husband, however, is dead; further intelligence concerning him I cannot give you."

Mrs. Hargreaves covered her face with her hands, and left the room sobbing. Even the most hardened of men have that greatest of all earthly blessings, a wife's sincere affection. One would think that such a feeling, one of the purest in the human breast, should prove the safeguard of those who would err. But sometimes it is powerless to restrain.

When Mrs. Hargreaves had left the room, Alfred read the letter. The listeners were Jenny, Andrew and Geoffrey. What effect it had upon the latter, the

reader may easily judge. The note was from the French Commissary of Police, and ran as follows:—

A monsieur le commissaire en chef de la Police
de Londres, à Scotland Yard.

Monsieur,

J' ai l'honneur de vous annoncer, que l' homme Hargreaves,
dont votre Gouvernement avait offert une récompense de 100 livres
sterling, a été arrêté à Paris à cause d'un meurtre au Bois de
Boulogne.

L'accusé a été condamné, et en Sept jours va expier son crime.
Agreez monsieur le commissaire, mes salutations distinguées.

JACQUES DELAROCHE,

Commissaire en chef de la Police de Paris.

“ Such is the end of Hargreaves. A worthy close to such a career. To be caught by the French police, and hanged for a murder committed in the Bois de Boulogne.

“ Rather say, an unworthy end. It is unworthy of any man, even though his career may have been of the worst description,” said Alfred.

“ Pray do not continue the subject,” said Jenny. “ Above all, never let this matter be mentioned to Nurse Hargreaves. It would kill her.”

Geoffrey left the room. His thoughts were not to be uttered, but the stings they brought with them were keenly felt by him who had been a participant in the crimes which had formed part of the condemned criminal’s career. It was indeed a bitter lesson, and that night he thanked the merciful God who had plucked him, a brand from the burning, out of the path of destruction. The only thought which permanently troubled him now, was that Jessie was lost to him. Alick was with him; but that patient, long-suffering wife, where was she?

From that fearful scene she fled, she knew not whither. She had but little money in her purse, and but one feeling in her bosom. That feeling was, that she would never return to the murderer of her darling boy. She wandered up and down the boulevards, but though she looked weird-like and pale, her lips were firmly set, and her resolution unshaken. Whilst she was urging her way through the busy crowds, she heard a little girl utter the one word, “ mother.”

“ Why should I not return to *my* mother? The only one in whom I was never, never deceived. She promised to receive me if I were poor and homeless. Can I be poorer than I am now? I have lost my

richest treasure, my darling boy. Can I be more homeless than I am now! Dear Mossgrove! All the happy days I once passed there have gone, I fear never more to return. But I will join my dear mother again, and ask her forgiveness. I know she will give it me."

"Home, home; sweet, sweet home!" How strange it is that our thoughts always wander thitherward in trouble and distress. We deem it a harbour of refuge, where arms of love are twined around us, and sweet words of consolation pour into our ears.

She returned there, and who shall picture the meeting between the good old widow and her only daughter. When the tears had been shed, and the newly-found child had been strained to the widow's heart in a long, loving embrace; when all the troubles of the past few years had found an echo in the heart of the affectionate mother; when the good old gardener had welcomed back "Miss Jessie" with eyes overflowing with great, genuine tears; all the past then seemed as a dream. The birds sang as sweetly as ever. The trim garden was redolent of perfumes, and the sun still peeped in and out of the latticed windows. It was the Mossgrove of old, and there were the three inmates, just as of yore.

Yet not quite as of yore. The inexperienced girl had merged into the experienced woman. The trusting maiden, into the suffering wife and mother. Mrs. Ryle had completely ignored that ominous line in her letter to her daughter: "But should never be able to look upon you as the same daughter whom I lost." She forgave freely, and the very troubles poor Jessie had undergone, endeared her all the more to the widow's heart.

And what were the thoughts of the poor, persecuted wife of Geoffrey Wallis? The supposed death of her darling boy, had steeled her heart against the father. The holiest and best feelings of a woman's nature were fast being turned into a bitter disregard of their value and ennobling influence. In her last hurried glance, as she swept from the room where that dreadful scene was enacted, she noted that Alfred Wallis and Andrew Dean were her rescuers. She knew no more, and whether they had returned to S—— or not, she was equally ignorant. Nor was there any desire to enquire of them as to where her husband could be. She had vowed never to live again with the murderer of her

child, and she would keep that vow. The delicious tranquility and blessed peace she experienced in her residence at Mossgrove, formed a very violent contrast to that life of unrest, turbulency and dissension, out of which she had but just emerged.

The Mossgrove inmates held very little intercourse with their neighbours. In point of fact, Widow Ryle had not left the house for more than two years. Old Joseph, the gardener, had supplied all her wants from the neighbouring village, and there was no desire on the part of Jessie to break through the seclusion. She was sufficiently occupied with her own thoughts. Her face had grown pale and wan, whilst its grief-stricken aspect had been increased by the dress she wore, one of the deepest mourning.

She mourned for that cherished darling, she mourned for her husband, now dead to her, and, as she thought, dead to all the world. She mourned her own folly in taking for better and for worse, a man who could not control himself, and who was, therefore, ill-calculated to assume the care of another. Ah ! Jessie mourned inwardly, as well as outwardly. The *heart* was clad in sable.

At Rose Cottage, within a short distance of his own mother, little Alick, too, yearned for his mamma. It was his daily cry, and it was the great grief now of Geoffrey's life. The inordinate appetite for drink had ceased, and had there still been any lurking desire, his own strong intellect, which had been strengthened by the long and disgraceful experience he had gone through, would have restrained him. Indeed, as is always the case, a deep, lasting and bitter hatred of that which had caused him so much degradation, and had well-nigh ruined him, took the place of his former drink appetite. But where was now that affectionate wife, whose warning words had tried to restrain him in his downward course. He missed those loving arms, which turned around his neck with anxious solicitude. He missed her cheerful, musical voice. Her every virtue was heightened by her absence. She was his constant theme of conversation, and he determined, as soon as Alfred would allow him, to set out and search the world over, ere he would again return to S—— without his beloved Jessie. The more, that he could present her with her darling Alick, whom the fond mother supposed murdered.

As they were talking of the past, one day, Alfred said:—

"Geoffrey, do you remember what that Temperance lecturer said, on the evening when you required so much persuasion to accompany your sister and myself? It almost seemed like a prophecy. God be thanked it has not been carried out entirely, and I shall yet live to see my brother an honoured member of God's household."

"I trust so. But I feel that I am, as yet, on the lowest round of the ladder. I have a dreadful retrospect to sponge away, Alfred, and I owe it to you that I am enabled to do this, and not entirely to have been left in sin and shame."

Geoffrey had given Alfred that paper signed by Hargreaves. Of course it went far to exonerate him from much of his supposed criminality. Still, Geoffrey very painfully remembered that poor widow whom he had deprived of her hard-earned savings. One day, he obtained a banker's draft for £100, and enclosed it to her, thus restoring the money doubled. It was a poor reparation, of course, for the theft *had* been committed (when he was under the influence of drink,) but it still was the only one the repentant man had it in his power to make.

Jenny, dear little Jenny, was very glad to have her brother home again. She was glad for his own sake, for, despite his faults, she loved him very dearly, and it was a day of jubilee to her when he was brought home to Rose Cottage again. It might be there was some little element of selfishness in her joy, too; for it was not above eight weeks after his Parisian journey, when Andrew Dean called upon his beloved, and claimed the fulfillment of her conditional promise.

She placed her hand in his with little hesitation on her own part, for Andrew Dean's name was now known far and wide. The newspaper had attained a celebrity almost unprecedented in the annals of journalism. The leading articles were quoted in high political quarters, and even Lord P——n, had been known to quote entire paragraphs from the "leaders" on political economy. But it was especially on social reform that the beauty of these articles were most apparent. They manifested a most minute and searching investigation of the truth, with a full knowledge of the subject handled.

"Yes, dear Andrew, laying aside all affectation, I do

love you, and will, with pleasure, become your wife whenever you choose. Even now, though, if dear Jessie could be found, and my brother Geoffrey made happy again, it would enhance my pleasure."

"I have heard some news, darling, which I think gives me a clue to her whereabouts. I have a plan in my head, which, if successful, may give you all the happiness you require. From my observations, I think there will be another couple to be united, Jenny. Is it true that Milly Debenham and Alfred have come to an understanding at last?"

"I believe so. She is a sensible girl, and I think it will be what it ought to be, a love-match. She is rather hard upon you, Andrew; but as you are so terribly clever, and as no one else check-mates you, it is perhaps as well to have Milly in the family as soon as possible. But mind you, for all that, she takes in your newspaper and reads all your articles."

"Oh, then, as she is a subscriber, and pays regularly, I suppose, we must forgive her those small, sarcastic attempts at sharp-shooting? The more, as she is a good girl at heart, and practices the Christian virtues as a good woman ought. Here comes the gay Lothario himself. Let us ask him when he intends entering the bonds which no longer leave him a bachelor gay."

"I can easily answer that. When Jessie Wallis is restored to us, I will then be married upon the same day as yourselves. That's candid, I think," said Alfred."

"It is," said Jenny, "and very agreeable and accommodating, too. And as Andrew says he has got some clue to Jessie's whereabouts, we may hope that the happy day cannot be very far distant, Alfred."

"Clue? What is it, Andrew? You do not know how anxious I am on this subject. Geoffrey's whole happiness depends upon our finding his wife."

"I cannot tell you yet. You must pardon me for my reticence; but if my plan and my clue is worth anything, I will soon restore your sister to you. You must not mention this to Geoffrey, at present."

"I will not. Poor fellow, he is with mamma. His attention to her is continuous and indefatigable. He thinks he cannot do too much for her, and she seems to be weary and dispirited when he is not near. She knows him, and yet there is a something wanting in her manifestation of affection for him," said Alfred.

"Ah! He will yet be a great man. He will now be like myself, I humbly hope, all the better for having passed through the fiery furnace. His nature has been purified of the dross, and the precious metal will alone remain. Well, I must be off; I have a duty to perform, all the more pleasant since it is one that my darling little wife who is to be, wants to see brought to a successful issue."

So Andrew left, and as he walked on past S—, towards Longford, he met Joseph, the Mossgrove gardener, jogging on towards him.

"Good morning, Joseph. Can I have a few words with you?"

"Certainly, Mr. Andrew. A good many if you like."

"Have you any other inmate at Mossgrove than the good widow just now?"

"Will you tell me what you want to know for, sir?"

"Because I have the interests and happiness of Jessie Wallis at heart, and, if you will confide in me, and trust me, I will promise to secure both for her."

"Well, sir, I know that what you say, you mean; I was not instructed to keep the secret; still, I knew pretty well that I was expected not to mention it. I suppose you want to know if Mrs. Wallis is with her mother now? Well, she is."

"And do you know that her husband is a thoroughly reformed man, and worthy of the return of his wife's best affections?"

"I'm glad to hear it; but she will never live with him again. The memory of her poor dead little son, whom she seems to have loved so dearly, has estranged her from her husband's affection, Mr. Andrew."

"*Alick is alive, Joseph.*"

"Alive! Why, you amaze me! This is indeed the best news you could bring me." And the poor affectionate old gardener wept freely; for the interests of widow Ryle and her daughter were very dear to him.

"I knew that my communication would please you, Joseph. I have one thing to ask you. Say nothing to your mistress or Mrs. Wallis about this. You will find that I shall now act promptly for the happiness of both."

And with this, Andrew Dean passed on his way.

Let us return to Mossgrove. Only twenty-four hours had elapsed since Andrew's rencontre with Joseph. It was a bright summer's day. The sunlight danced

in and out of the ivy-clothed cottage as of old. It gilded everything with its joyous presence. The ivy-leaves twinkled with the shimmering light. The cloud of smoke which curled from the chimney-top, was even illumined and penetrated by the rays of sunshine, and ascended lazily towards the blue sky. The loud caws of the rooks which made their homes in the wood beyond, were notes of joy and peace. All nature was merry, and but one heart was desolate; that heart was Jessie's. She was out in the garden, thinking that only one thing marred her happiness, and but for the cloud which had overshadowed her young life, this beautiful day would have appealed to her, and imbued her with the same joy which pervaded all nature around. She was looking through the wood, down the path where Geoffrey Wallis used often to come and meet her, and make those promises of love and protection, which, alas, had been but so poorly fulfilled.

While she gazed, in a fit of abstraction, a light youthful footstep came bounding over the verdure. On it came, at such a speed as none but a juvenile pedestrian can assume. It was a boy, for he was singing merrily, and waving his cap to Jessie as he came in sight. With one bound, and a loud shriek, which brought out the quiet, sedate old widow, the mother clasped to her arms dear little Alick. She kissed him, and strained him so passionately to her breast that he was in danger of suffocation.

"Dear, dear Alick! My darling boy! Kind providence has brought my treasure back to these arms. Who has restored the dead to life?"

"Dead, mamma? I never was dead. I awoke from what seemed like a sleep, in that nasty room at Paris, and found you had gone. Nobody seemed to know where you were, until Andrew Dean found you out. Isn't it funny; we've been living at Rose Cottage all this time and never knew you were here?"

"We, darling? Who else do you mean?"

"Why, papa, of course."

A cloud overspread Jessie's face; it was an expression of pain and uneasiness. She thought her future peace was again to be endangered. But this was quickly dispelled, for little Alick went on chattering.

"And he is so kind now, mamma. I didn't like him once, you know. But he is very good to me now. He never touches wine, or anything of that sort, and is

like Aunty Jenny and Uncle Alfred ; he 's a—a—tee something ; I forget it now. But he has been so for nearly three months, and we all love him very dearly Butoh, mamma, I forgot. There's a letter he sent for you."

" Come in, my darling ! Come in and talk to grand-mamma, whilst I see what this letter is about."

She tried to look calm ; but her frame shook with a great emotion.

The letter was opened, and thus it ran :—

" My own injured wife :—I send back our son to you. God has mercifully spared him to us, a greater blessing than one so erring as I, deserved. I am now, by the providence of the Most High, a repentant man. I feel that not words, but acts are needed to convince you that I am entirely changed. I have indeed been rescued from a sad end. I implore you to give back your old love to me, and I am sure you will find no further occasion to withdraw it from your affectionate, but humble husband, GEOFFREY WALLIS."

Jessie kissed this letter, and, with joy beaming from her eyes, handed the note to her mother, who read it through, and then said :—

" This is a day of happiness for all, love, more especially for you. I see you want my advice. Join him again, by all means, and let your love uphold him in the reformation he has begun."

Jessie at once prepared herself to return with Alick, whom ever and anon she kissed and fondled like a child who has found a long-lost toy.

Who shall picture that happy, thrice happy meeting ? As Geoffrey folded his beloved wife to his heart, he inwardly thanked God that a chance of redeeming the past had yet been left to him. There was a cheery welcome from Jenny and Alfred, and, in a very short time, Jessie was quite at home.

Let us now, ere we note the closing scene to which we shall introduce our patient reader, bid farewell to other personages in our history.

The Rev. Harvey Sleigh was attacked, in a London hospital, with that dreadful disease, " delirium tremens ;" in the midst of his fearful ravings, he was called to appear before the bar of God. What could he say when the awful day of judgment arrived ? In that text which he preached from, long ago, in S——, had he not already condemned himself ? " No drunkard shall inherit the kingdom of God."

In "The Times" newspaper, there was one day news of the "Fighting Cock," in Gracechurch-Street. It had become so disreputable a place, as the haunt of thieves, and bad characters of all sorts, that its license was withdrawn; and Angus James himself was sentenced to twenty years transportation, for complicity in a great jewellery robbery, which had been planned at his house, and in which, to a very great extent, he had "aided and abetted."

The Rollinsons had purchased back their old estates from Sir Reginald Steyne, and their names, both father and son, were now associated with every good movement. The squire erected and endowed a new church in S—, entirely at his own expense, whilst Robert purchased the "Green Man" at Longford, and converted it into a very good "Temperance Hotel." Both are frequent visitors at Rose Cottage, and their society is invariably hailed as an acquisition. Robert especially seconds all the Temperance movements in his locality, and always keeps open purse, house and hand, for anything connected with the cause. We need scarcely say that Lawyer Close keeps his distance. He knows that he was tried in the balance, and "found wanting."

Taylor, the man whose sottishness murdered his own child, and destroyed by fire, the roof from his own head, emigrated to America, and enlisted in the United States army. He was killed in a stampede amongst the Indians.

When Hargreaves fled to Paris, after the forgery, he was, as the reader already knows, in the employ of a Longford spirit house. He absconded with nearly £700 of their money. They made a claim upon Nurse Hargreaves, who, being totally unable to pay this amount, though she considered it her duty to do so, was assisted, to a considerable extent, by Alfred Wallis.

Wilson has succeeded wonderfully on the road, and, by his example and influence, succeeded in undermining the commercial wine-drinking system. He has been advanced in position, by Alfred, beyond his utmost expectations, and is only second in importance, at the S— establishment, to Alfred himself.

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It was a bright July morning, when at an early hour, the sweet bells of Mr. Rollinson's new church rang out

a merry peal. It was a wedding day! Such a one as had not been in S—— for many a long year. It was to be a double wedding. "Andrew Dean to Jenny Wallis, only daughter of the late Squire Wallis;" also "Alfred Wallis to Milly Debenham, only daughter of the Rev. John Debenham," &c., &c., in true newspaper fashion, chronicled by one of Andrew's sub-editors. We are no hand at describing weddings, but the sub-editor made it his constant study. You read in his article how the brides were arrayed in this, that, and the other, of the cheerful appearance of the bridegrooms, of the charming brides, of the magnificent breakfast (to refresh you after the fatiguing ceremony of playing a first part in, or assisting at, a wedding;) of the splendid equipages, the six bridesmaids; how Mrs. Geoffrey Wallis was principal bridesmaid for Milly Debenham; how the clergyman was on "this occasion" assisted by two more from Longford; and also that the five hundred workmen from the Wallis factory turned out in their best Sunday clothes, *en masse*, forming, by the aid of hoops, evergreens and roses, a regular bower from the church-door to Rose Cottage. Then the lively, enthusiastic sub-editor, finally tells you that the happy couples departed on a tour through Scotland, immediately the grand breakfast was over. Our S. E. has his own way in describing the delicious compounds and condiments which appealed to his individual palate at the long-remembered meal. It is a sensitive point with him, and so he gives himself unlimited license in the description.

All this certainly took place, but it did not mention, seeing that the S. E. had no definite information on the point, that on this auspicious day, a deed of equal partnership was drawn up between Geoffrey and Alfred, and that on the departure of the latter for Scotland, Geoffrey assumed the reins of government at the factory. He became as popular with the workmen as his brother, and his future life, though not free from "the ills which flesh is heir to," was comparatively a life of peace and serenity, and the brightest star in the unclouded firmament of happiness, was his beloved Jessie. Geoffrey paid assiduous attention to his poor imbecile mother, who never seemed to be truly happy without him. Widow Ryle, too, often came to Rose Cottage to spend a few hours with her, and as she grew calmer, and seemed to

regain a little more of the reason with which God had endowed her, it was supposed that she might ultimately regain entire possession of her faculties.

Reader! our task is done. Our pen has but feebly traced the ills entailed upon humanity by the drink traffic. Their record should be graved upon rock, and read by generations to come. We have but poorly performed the duty assigned ourselves. But we aimed at plain facts and truthful delineations. If we have fallen short of that standard, ours be the fault. The tool may have glanced off, and the marble feature which should have been graven in faithful lines, may have suffered as a consequence. But the design in the sculptor's mind cannot be erased. It was there before chisel and marble were called into requisition. Our cause still remains the same; every-day experience is unchanged; the fearful ravages are still going on next door to you; we are responsible for this evil, and none of us can shake off that responsibility. The wheel of progress needs your aid, and requires your assistance. Then comes the cry, echoed by hundreds, reverberating through the valleys and over the hills, the cry of the weak and the desolate, the wail of the suffering and heartbroken, the piteous moan of the down-trodden wives, the unclothed children and irresolute husbands; the cry which echoes all over the world, which comes to us from the quiet village as well as from the Babylons of our country; that cry is

WILL YOU HELP US?

TEMPERANCE ANECDOTES.

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THE REV. NEWMAN HALL ON THE LIFE OF HIS FATHER.—The Rev. Newman Hall delivered an interesting lecture, at the Surrey Chapel, to a numerous audience, on "The Life of his Father," well-known as the author of a little work called "The Sinner's Friend." The rev. gentleman explained that he was about bringing out an autobiography of his father, at his own special request, from a diary extending over a period of fifty years. The subject of the forthcoming autobiography led a career in early manhood of almost unexampled intemperance, though the rev. lecturer described him as being subsequently—ever since he could recollect him—a man who led a life of holiness and uprightness. His infancy was marked by many hairbreadth escapes from all sorts of perils. At one time it was a fall through the ice, and at another a kick from a horse. At eight years of age he mounted a horse from his father's stable, placed his younger brother on his feet in the front of him, and trotted off. By-and-by, on turning to come home, the horse set off at full gallop, the infant riders were thrown with some force to the ground, but both escaped. He was fond of mischief, and if any extraordinary prank was played it was always set down to "that boy Hall." Once he had a very narrow escape for his life. Having climbed a tree to get some eggs, in his descent he fell on some palings beneath, where he stuck some time in great agony, but was rescued and recovered. At last he resolved to become a soldier, and started from Maidstone, with a bundle on his shoulder, for Gravesend. On reaching a hill in the neighbourhood he sat down to rest, and the words, "Turn again, Whittington, thrice Lord Mayor of London," struck him with such force that he repented of his errand, and turned his footsteps homeward again. As he grew up he began to live a fast life, joined the yeomanry cavalry, turned his attention to amateur acting, drank freely, was a jolly good fellow amongst his companions, an ardent admirer and student of Tom Paine and Voltaire. But he was a man of kindly feeling and generous disposition,

always ready to do a good turn to his fellow-creatures. He was engaged to be married to the daughter of a clergyman, and went one day to visit his intended. During his stay in the neighbourhood, he heard of a sad case of distress. A poor family who could not pay their rent, had their goods seized, bed and all, and had nothing left in the house but a little straw to lie upon. It happened that day he had an engagement with his lady love, but yielding to the impulse of generosity he forgot all about it, and running off to the party who had taken the goods, he paid the price of the bed, took it on his own shoulders, and through wind and rain and heat, marched back with it to the poor people's cottage, to their astonishment and delight. This done, he remembered his engagement with the young lady, who, he flattered himself, would forgive him under the circumstances of the case. But not so. She expressed her indignation at his inattention to her in such emphatic terms, that the match was broken off. He became a clerk in a wine-merchant's office, and step by step a drunkard. Some friend put into his hand a copy of Bishop Porteus' "Evidences of Christianity," which had such an effect on his mind that he pitched Tom Paine's volume into the fire with the somewhat characteristic exclamation, "There, Tom Paine, go to the flames, for you are a liar, Tom Paine!" At thirty years of age, he met with the rev. gentleman's mother. There was some little difficulty about the courtship, and the lady's friends being opposed to the marriage, she disappeared one night, and at last he found that she had been sent to the house of a friend who lived in a rustic seclusion some distance off. With the spirit of a true Leander, he set off on foot, and after walking all night, he arrived at the spot next morning, and presented himself to the young lady in time for breakfast. The old folks followed in his wake, with the view of preventing the marriage, but when they arrived in the yard he watched his chance, and, unobserved, he carried away the pole of their carriage, so that they could not return with the fair one, and the result was a reconciliation and marriage. The reverend gentleman then traced, by the aid of extracts from the diary, a sketch of the dark side of his father's history; how he fell from one degree of darkness to another until it obtained a complete and ruinous mastery over him. On one occasion he got so drunk on wine, during

a visit to a friend who pressed him to drink, that on his return home he lost all consciousness, and wandered about amongst the open mouths of the coal shafts, until at length he fell down the steep banks of the canal, where it was very deep, and the descent into the water very precipitous. Fortunately, just at the edge, he rolled against a large stone, and there lay till he recovered his senses, and with difficulty staggered back up the bank. After passing through many stages of misery and degradation, he at length gained the mastery over his intemperate habits, and for more than forty years led a life of self-sacrifice and eminent usefulness.

AN OFT-TOLD TALE.—It was a dark night in the end of November. The rain fell thick and fast—the cold was intense. A young girl fled along one of the wet streets of the dreary city. She had only a thin shawl round her head and shoulders to protect her from the cold. She was very pale and frightened-looking ; and, no wonder, for she had just come out of one of the “palaces” which here and there shed their glare on the dismal town. She never once stopped in her rapid flight till she reached the next palace ; this she entered also, but was out again in a moment. On she went through three or four, emerging at last from one more brilliant and noisy than the rest, half-dragging, half-supporting a lad a year or two older than herself, who seemed quite unable to guide his own steps.

“Oh, try and walk, George !” she cried through her tears. “ You must come home. Father has fallen off the top of the new houses, and is sore hurt, and mother is in a terrible state.”

Half-sobered with this information, the lad went on with her. They soon reached the place which the poor girl called “home.”

It was a poor enough room, but it was perfectly clean, and on the top of a chest of drawers in the corner, there was a well-worn bible, with three or four other books.

On the bed lay the crushed form of, what a few short hours ago, had been a strong man.

George Taylor was a carpenter—a good workman, too—but *he was a drunkard*. He had been employed that day putting up the scaffolding of some new houses. He had drunk a good deal during the afternoon, and, in turning to come down, he lost his footing and fell

from a great height. He was quite insensible now, and the doctor had just left, giving no hope of his ever again awaking to consciousness. His poor wife bent over the form of her husband, her tears falling fast on his cold hand.

Twenty years before, Martha Taylor had been a young, good-looking girl. She had married against the wishes of all her friends, for even then she knew her husband's fatal habit. For some years after their marriage, her influence had kept him right; but gradually old companions and old habits had resumed their sway, and all her efforts had only enabled her to keep a house over their heads.

To add to her sorrow, her boy—her only son—the child of many prayers—for she was a good woman—had lately become his father's companion in the evenings, and was, alas, very often in the sad state in which his sister found him that night. He was quite himself now, and much shocked by the father's fearful fate.

The night passed slowly and sorrowfully to the three watchers in that wretched home—it was a night none of them ever forgot.

By the side of his dying father, George made a solemn vow never again to touch or taste what had been the cause of all their grief and trouble, but as far he could, to be his mother's stay and comfort, a vow which he kept to the end of his life.

The grey morning broke over the city and found the widow and orphans kneeling by the side of their dead.

THE BOY THAT LOVED HIS MOTHER.—I am going to tell you how a little boy watched over his sick mother, and was the means of saving her life.

In a small town of France, a hundred years ago, there lived a miser. He was a man who loved money so much that he denied himself the common necessaries of life in order to save it. A miserable, unhappy man was Master Lombard; for that was his name. He was by trade a chemist, and had made a great deal of money; but he lived like a beggar. He never showed anybody any kindness. At night, when he shut up his shop, he would sit by the smallest scrap of fire, and eat a dry crust for his supper; then he would bring out his gold pieces and count them over and over. Alas! of what use were they, hoarded up like that? I think if he had tried the delight of doing good to

others with even one of those pieces, he would have found counting them up a very poor pleasure in comparison. But he never gave anything away—never made anybody happier. The blessed Bible words, “He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth to the Lord,” never reached his heart. He lent money to other people to bring him in a profit; but he never tried the better profit of lending it to the Lord.

One cold winter's night he was sitting as usual in his back parlour, with nothing to comfort him but his bags of gold, when he heard a knock at the outer door. He did not trouble himself to get up to answer it at first, for he thought it was only a foolish boy playing him a trick, and that, if it really were a customer, he would be sure to knock again. Presently the knock did come again, and he slowly rose from his seat, unbarred the door, and then looked out into the street. The ground was covered with snow, all was still and silent; and he was about to close the door, angry at having been disturbed for nothing, when a thinly-clad boy stepped out of the shadow of the doorway.

“Please you, good Mr. Lombard, it is me.”

“*Me!* and who dares to disturb me at this time of night? who says I never give to those who want? they speak false! You want a thrashing; and you shall have it!” and he seized the trembling child to fulfil his threat.

He struggled from his grasp, and again began to tell his tale.

“Please, Master Lombard, I only want some medicine for my mother.” Lombard would again have interrupted him, but he continued,—“She is ill, sir—she is dying, partly from want of food; but this medicine may save her, if you will only give it me. Look, it is in Latin, but you can read it.”

The apothecary took the paper from the boy's hand, and stepping back into the shop, put on his spectacles to read it. When he had finished, the boy told of his mother's affliction, and asked anxiously whether the remedy were a good one.

“Yes,” said Lombard, “the remedy is good, but it is dear; it will cost a good deal of money.”

“Oh, what shall I do? for I have only fivepence;” and the boy thought of his sick and dying mother, with an agony of distress.

The miser looked on in cold unconcern. Well does

the Bible say, "The love of money is the root of all evil." He had gold in plenty, but he never thought of giving it to save a fellow-creature's life. "It is no affair of mine," muttered he.

"Oh, if you would only let me have the medicine!" again sighed the child.

"Bring the money and you shall have it; but not a drop without, I tell you," was the reply.

"Oh, Master Lombard, give me but the medicine for my mother, and I will be your servant, your slave; I will work for you night and day; I will do anything, go anywhere—only save my mother!"

The hard and cruel miser began to relent. "I want a boy," he thought to himself; "I know this one to be steady and clever; I can work him hard, feed him little; it would answer my purpose. Yes, I will take the boy—I might have done worse;" and, having come to this conclusion, he made up the medicine, and then returned to his cold, solitary parlour to meditate over his bargain.

The grateful boy meanwhile hastened home to his mother. He gave her the coveted draught, which had cost him so much to earn, and then all through the night he watched beside the sick bed. It was cold and cheerless; but what mattered that? Others were sleeping, he was watching; others had comforts around them, he had none; but he cared not; his whole soul was absorbed in the one hope for his mother's life; and, if that was spared to him all else seemed as nothing. His brave young heart rose even in the prospect of the difficult path to which he had bound himself, if only God would spare his mother.

And God did reward such love as this. When the morning dawned she opened her eyes, she spoke to him, she was better: the medicine had worked its desired end. When she was well enough to hear his story, how sad and grieved she was to hear of the hard lot before him, and yet how she thanked God for having given her such a son! She was a widow, in sickness and poverty, yet how rich she felt in the possession of this better gift than worldly goods!

In due time she recovered, and the boy entered upon his duties at Lombard's shop. Hard indeed they were, and very difficult he was to please; the food was bad, and lodgings worse, yet he never complained; and, more than this, he prospered. The lad was clever—

God had given him talents ; better still, he was pains-taking and industrious. As the years passed on he grew rapidly in knowledge, and in the good opinion of others ; so that at last the poor fatherless boy, the miser's apprentice, became a wealthy and celebrated man, the chemist Parmentier.

THE OCEAN OF INTEMPERANCE.—Archie thoughtfully one day said, that he had often heard people speak of the ocean of intemperance, and that he would like very much to hear a description of it. Uncle William promised to give a short description of it one evening, and accordingly he gathered his young friends together and thus began :—

“ The ocean of intemperance is a very large ocean. You know what an arm of the sea is. Well, this ocean has got arms and branches all over the world. It is found in America, in Asia, in Africa, in Europe, and in almost every island in which men are found. It is thus a very large ocean.

“ Perhaps you will wonder how this great ocean is fed. You know that seas require to be fed with streams and showers, or they would gradually dry up. The burning heat of the sun and the power of the winds of heaven would gradually turn the whole sea into vapour, and unless that vapour again returned to the earth in the form of rain and dew, the sea would, through length of years, disappear. So the ocean of intemperance would be dried up unless it was daily fed from some source or other. How, then, is it fed ? I will tell you. It is fed by innumerable little streams, known all over the world as *moderation streams*. Though this is the general name of the streams, many of them have also got particular names. I will tell you a few of these, in order to give you some idea of them. One of them is called ‘*a morning dram*.’ This is a very celebrated stream among a class of men called tipplers. These men are always unwell when they rise out of bed in the morning. They have a headache, or a heartache, which in their own language is called ‘the horrors,’ or they are so very feeble that they can hardly crawl along the street. They think, if they drink a little at the stream called ‘*a morning dram*,’ they will instantly be cured and made all right for the day. Poor fools ! they forget that it was by drinking at that very stream that all their sorrows were brought upon them.

"Another stream which helps to feed the sea of intemperance is called by the name of '*a social glass*.' People who drink of this stream always go to it in companies: sometimes two, sometimes three, but generally a much greater number go together. They sit down on the banks of the stream, and there they fill their glasses of its waters, and having done so, they drink to each other's health. They say, 'here's to you, my friend, I wish you long life and happiness,' or some such thing. They call this drinking healths. They often drink their own health away in drinking to the health of others.

"Another of these streams is called '*a friendly glass*.' This one has got a great many names. It is also called '*a tasting*,' '*a cup of kindness*,' '*a little drop to do you good*.' A glassful from this stream is generally presented to people when they visit, and they are thought to be very singular people if they don't '*taste a little*.' And yet many who drink a little every day from this stream soon feel that their feet begin to slip from beneath them, and at length fall into it and are drowned.

"I will only speak of another stream, though I might name many more. It is called '*an evening tumbler*,' or '*a tumbler after supper*.' They are mostly old men who drink at this stream. Many of them are fat, jolly-looking fellows. They have red noses, and pimpled faces, and they breathe with some difficulty. They will sit an hour or two after supper sipping away at the waters of this stream. I may tell you that the waters of this stream are warm, and send up a kind of smoke or steam. Those who drink of this stream, generally go to bed quite stupid, and are sometimes found dead in bed in the morning. There is a disease very common amongst them called apoplexy, which very frequently causes them to die in a single moment.

"Such, then, are some of the streams which feed the ocean of intemperance.

"A great many are now sailing upon the ocean of intemperance. Some have only sailed for a very short time. They are easily known from the rest. They have very merry faces, and they laugh a great deal, and say they are very happy. They are like the fly which sports around the candle flame, but which in a moment may be consumed. THESE ARE YOUNG DRUNKARDS.

"Others have been sailing for some time, and these are the most numerous part of the sailors. They have

generally haggard looks, and seem as if they had been very much weather-beaten. Sometimes they pretend to be very merry, and their mirth is almost like madness; at other times they are silent, sad, and gloomy. Some of them are very tired of being on the ocean, and would give anything to get off it again. Some are so alarmed at the thought that they are on this ocean, that they drink deeply of its waves, so that they may be made stupid and forget their danger. Others, again, are so silly, that they are pleased with their situation, just as the slave is pleased with his yoke, or the madman with the loaded pistol which he thoughtlessly points to his breast. THESE ARE DRUNKARDS OF SOME YEARS' STANDING.

"There is another class sailing upon that ocean who have been longer upon it than any whom I have yet spoken of. They are very seldom sober. They are generally stupid with drink. They scarcely ever think about anything but rum or whisky. Their appearance is very wretched. They are very ill-clad. Their hats are generally without crowns, their shoes hardly able to hang upon their feet, and all their clothes dirty, and tattered, and torn. They never can keep any money in their pockets, it all goes for drink. They think they could not live many days without it. They must have drink in the morning; drink at noon; drink at night; drink all the day long. There is something that gnaws and burns within them every hour. They are often mad with it, and they are frequently mad for it when they cannot get it. They swear, too, and mock at religion, and profane God's holy day, and blaspheme as if they were evil spirits and not men. They are tottering, too, on the very brink of the grave, and ready to drop into hell. THESE ARE OLD DRUNKARDS.

How ARTHUR WATSON WAS FROZEN TO DEATH.— "Frozen to death!" you say? Yes, Arthur Watson was frozen to death. Listen, and we will tell you how.

"Mother, what time do you think father will come home?" asked Arthur, one night, as he knelt down in front of the fire, by his mother's side.

"I don't know, Artie," replied she, "it is after ten o'clock, and I fear he is not on the road home yet."

"Let me go for father. He will come with me, if he comes with anyone. Let me go."

"But, Artie, it is so cold to-night, and you are not dressed warm enough."

"Never mind, mother; I can go. I *will* go! It is a shame for the landlord to keep him there, drawing his money out of him, and I'll tell him so, if he says anything to me." Here the lad faltered, for he remembered how that very day, at school, some unkind class-fellows had taunted him about his patched coat, and his father's drunken habits.

"Be gentle, Artie," said his mother. "You will have more chance of getting your father home if you are."

"I will mother, if I can; but it's hard to be quiet with that landlord when he abuses me for 'loafing about there,' as he calls it. I wish I was a man, that I do; or that there was no drink sold."

So saying, the little fellow tied on an old comforter round his neck, and started off to find his father. Artie was an only child, and might have rejoiced in the light of a very happy home, had not the drink demon taken possession of it, and cast its dark shadow over it. William Watson was a drunkard, and this fact contained the reason of the unhappiness which fell to the lot of Artie and his mother. Arthur helped to make his mother's troubles lighter by his thoughtful sympathy and good conduct; so it was no wonder that mother and son clung together as those cling who have nothing else to cling to. Mrs. Watson hoped that Artie would grow up a good man, and be a comfort to her in her old age; while he in his turn thought only of being able to help his mother.

William Watson was not always a drunkard. When he married his wife he only drank a little. But moderation is like an inclined plane, and so he found it. In a few years he became a confirmed drunkard; ruined his home and prospects, and brought poverty and misery where he ought to have brought only happiness. Consequently, poor fare and poor clothing fell to Artie's share. But he had the right sort of spirit in him; he was a good, honest lad, although wearing patched clothes, and would have been contented with them till he could procure better. But in the school Artie attended, there were some mean-spirited boys who occasionally taunted him about his father's drunkenness, and his mean dress, and then he would steal sorrowfully home, knowing that it was but too true.

Boys! never taunt a poor boy about what he cannot help. If his father be a drunkard, or his clothes be poor and patched, *don't taunt him with it*. It is mean and unkind. Rather pity and sympathize with him.

Arthur went on his mission to the Blue Lion. The night was exceedingly cold, and he shivered as he went. Snow was falling, but on he went, for he knew that at eleven o'clock his father would be turned into the street too drunk to find his way home. Several times, when in this state, a policeman had picked him up and carried him to the station-house, but Artie had lately prevented this by being on the spot at the hour of closing. This was his object on the night in question. It, however, wanted half-an-hour to closing time; and fearing the landlord, Artie retired into a nook opposite the door of the Blue Lion, there to watch and wait for his father.

Eleven o'clock came, and soon after, the noisy visitors at the Blue Lion were turned out; but Watson was not among them. Plenty of rough, staggering drunkards were there, but no father; so Artie hurried home, believing that his father must have left the inn unseen by him. Watson was not at home, nor had he been there; so without another word Artie started back again to watch the public-house door. It was against his mother's wish that he went the second time, but he would go. He knew that his father had that day received the balance of his fortnight's wages, and very likely the publican would, as he had done before, entice him to stay there till his money was gone. Artie therefore returned, and sat down in the little nook which had been so often his resting-place. Weariness and cold soon operated on his frame, and he fell asleep.

Some little time after midnight William Watson might have been seen staggering from the door of the Blue Lion, intending, doubtless, to reach his home. But his faithful guide was not at hand; and when he reached the corner, he took the wrong turning. Instead of going the road leading to his home, he went down the street reaching to the quay. He was seen to stagger forward over the pier, and fall down into the water. The call for assistance was immediately raised, and efforts were put forth to save him. He was taken out of the water, but not before life was extinct. The body was silently carried home.

"Mrs. Watson, now is your time for trust in God,"

said a compassionate neighbour, who bent over her, chafing her cold hands.

"Yes, but oh! it seems so terrible; and to think, too, that he was drowned when drunk. Oh, it is awful!"

What could the friendly neighbour say to this?

"Could n't he be saved before? Did no one see him?" asked the grief-stricken widow.

"He was seen, Mrs. Watson, but not soon enough to save him alive. The darkness prevented it."

"Oh! it is too much. I cannot bear it!" and the newly-made widow burst out into a fit of wailing.

Suddenly some one mentioned Arthur's name. The sound caught her ears. Artie! where is he? tell me?"

No one could tell her. No one knew anything about him.

"He went to watch for his father," said she. "He must be dead, too, or he would be here before this."

At this, one or two of Watson's fellow-workmen volunteered to go in search of the little fellow. It was about five o'clock in the morning,—a dreary, snowy December morning, and everywhere wore a mantle of white. They searched and enquired, but all in vain. No tidings could they gain of him. They then went to the police-station, but he was not there. What should they do? Should they return to his widowed mother, to tell her that their search was fruitless? As a last resource, one of them remembered that Artie was in the habit of occupying the little nook we have before mentioned, while waiting for his father, and suggested that he might have fallen asleep there. Acting on the suggestion, the party started at once for the place, and there they found Artie,—dead, stiff and frozen. Now the secret was out. He had fallen asleep, tired as he was, and while asleep exposure to the cold had killed him. Those who found him were hardy, strong men, but their hearts were not proof against such a sight as this. They looked at one another with silent horror, and then burst into tears. Here was this fair young life blighted by the drink, while at home lay the body of his drink-ruined father, whose spirit had been hurried into eternity, while totally unfit to meet his Maker. Would not this second blow kill Mrs. Watson? They feared almost to take Artie home, and yet they must.

With a sob and a groan they bore him home. How Mrs. Watson endured that sight we cannot tell.

"Widowed and childless am I?" she said; "then I am bereaved, indeed," and her wailings died away in a fit of unconsciousness.

It was months before she could rise from her bed of sickness; and when she did, she was haggard, and grey-haired, and went about as in a dream. She could not forget her dead; and if you had ever asked her about them, she would have led you to their graves as they lay side by side, and as you looked on them, she would have told you that Artie and his father were "*killed through drink!*"

THE CHILD'S QUESTION.—For twenty years Stirling pursued a course of inveterate drinking; sometimes he remained sober for months, and then fell back again. His home would have been a wreck had not a noble and pious woman presided at it. One of her little children became the means of his father's conversion to God and abstinence from drink. Thus he describes it:—

"I had been all day in the public-house, and at night, when I came home, my wife, as usual, was reading a chapter to the children. When she was so engaged, I went slipping in like a condemned criminal. The portion of Scripture read was the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew's gospel, in which the words occur:—'When the Son of Man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory; and before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats; and he shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left.' Our youngest boy, then about four years old, was lying with his head on his mother's lap, and just when she had read those awful words, he looked up earnestly into his mother's face, and asked, 'Will father be a goat then, mother?' This was too strong to be resisted. The earnest, innocent look of the child, the bewilderment of the poor mother, and above all, the question itself, smote me to the heart's core. I spent a sleepless, awfully miserable night, wishing rather to die than to live such a life. I was ashamed to go to church on the following Sabbath. I stopped at home, and read the 'Six Sermons on Intemperance,' by Beecher, which had found their way into the house, but how I never knew. But so it was, that when looking about

the house for some suitable book to read on Sabbath, I laid my hands on them, and they seemed as if written, and printed, and sent there for me alone. I was now decided. My resolution was taken, as it had never been before. All the men on earth could not tempt me to drink, clear or brown, thick or thin."

On the next day he spoke to his minister, and was directed by him to the blessed Saviour. The temperance cause was also talked of, and in the spring of 1830 a society was formed at Milngavie. The minister took the chair, and enrolled his name first on the list. The third was *James Stirling!* One of his sons was at that meeting; and as soon as he saw his father sign, he ran home to his mother, who had not been able to be present, and said, "Mother, mother, father has put down his name, and the minister has put down his name, and they are all putting down their names." "Thank God!" said she. "If he has signed it, he'll keep it. Thank God! he has signed it, and I'll sign it too; and ye must all sign it, for, oh, surely the time—the set time to favour us and many poor families has come at last!" Tears almost choked her utterance, but she had reason for her emotion. That night her weeping was ended; and when her husband returned home, they sang together the 116th Psalm at their domestic worship, until all wept. He then tried to read the parable of the Prodigal Son, but it was too much for him. On bended knees he poured out his soul, and God heard him. He rose from that mercy-seat a forgiven and converted man. There was joy indeed in heaven among the angels of God that a sinner had repented. And there was joy in the house of James Stirling, that the grace of God had been sufficient for a case like his, to change and renew his soul, and to save him from the misery of a drunkard's eternity.

Over such a scene as this, the eye cannot pass without emotion in the heart; but pause a moment, gentle reader, till you ask yourself whether you might not "go and do likewise. There is a close connection between the gospel and teetotalism. The convert became an abstainer. The reformed drunkard became a converted sinner. Temperance was made a hand-maid to religion. This is its proper function. It can be of great benefit to everyone; but it is of highest value when it fits the poor and besotted drunkard for

hearing the gospel of Jesus, and, through grace, apprehending the mercy offered to the guilty.

From that night Stirling kept the pledge. Many predicted his fall. Some attempted to seduce him. Others reported his return to sin, but he held on in abstinence and in prayer, and, supported by his pious and excellent wife, advanced in happiness and prosperity. He was enabled to lay aside the sin that easily beset him.

THE DRUNKARD'S CHILDREN.—MAY-DAY.—It was May-day in the City—not the May-day that dawns in the country, robed in glorious sunshine, and ushered in by the notes of thousands of feathered warblers—not the May-day that spreads the meadows with golden buttercups, and frames them with edges of silver-hued May. In the City, May-day's another thing.

The sunbeams glinted through the clouds of smoke, and brought their faint, beautiful messages of spring to the window-sill of a garret in the heart of that smoky metropolis. There was little to welcome their cheery shine, only a child's face looked brightly up, only a child's voice gladly exclaimed,—

“Oh, Sissy, Sissy, only look, here are sunbeams!”

Sissy came from her work in the far corner, and for an instant the bright rays rested upon her pale little face, surmounting her younger sister's golden hand.

“Sissy, it is May-day—won't you tell me a story of May-day?”

“I remember, dear, a May-day, long ago, when you were a tiny baby, such a May-day as you cannot imagine. We had a bright home then in a lovely little village. Papa was a clergyman there. Our house was covered with ivy, and honeysuckle, and roses. There was a lawn where Johnnie and I used to play; Johnnie, who died when first we came to this city, our angel brother now. There was a large orchard, with apple and pear-tree blossom in spring, and in the autumn rich with fruit. There was a swing upon two of the trees, and well I remember giving you your first swing. You had just learned to walk, and Johnnie and I held you lest you should fall; and you, dear, laughed and crowed, and clapped your chubby hands. Then we had play-fellows in the village who used to come to tea on May-day. Papa helped us to build a May-pole on the lawn, which we all used to

dance round. And this May-day, Eva, that I am telling you of, they chose a queen, and crowned me upon the lawn. My crown was made of pink-tinted May and violets, and Horace Hardie twined me a sceptre of flowering grasses. Oh! Eva, it was a merry, merry day. After tea we sang and danced round the pole, and papa came out with a large basket full of oranges, and trundled them amongst us. We were not afraid of him then, Eva; he was nearly always kind, and would sometimes romp with us on the lawn.

"That was our last happy May-day. You know how mamma died before the violets budded again; and how after that people began to say unkind things of papa. Papa was then often ill, and sometimes would not seem to know me when I spoke to him. Eva, dear, I thought that time very miserable, for I felt the shadow of a great dread hanging over us. One Sunday, papa was not able to preach, and the church was closed during morning service time; a neighbouring clergyman came to preach in the afternoon. There was great talk about this in the village, and I could not shut my ears to many of the cruel things that were said.

"One day, in the week that followed, Johnnie rushed home from school, and came to me in the nursery with crimson face, and heaving breast. 'Sissy,' he cried, 'the boys have been calling my father a drunkard; it is not true, is it? It was Will Heslop who said it, and I would have fought him, though he is so much bigger than I, but Horace Hardie came forward to defend me, and gave him the greatest thrashing he has ever had. Sissy, what are you crying for?'

"I held Johnnie in my arms where he had thrown himself, but I could not answer his question: I cried bitterly for the sorrow that had come upon us since mamma's death; and Jonnie read the truth in my tears. I thought at first the knowledge of our disgrace would kill him; he was always a delicate boy, feeling everything so keenly. At first he moped about, and it required all my efforts to persuade him to go to school; often he would come home stung by some new insult that Horace Hardie's brave protection could not avert, and weep passionately in his own room. After some time we left our old home, and came to London. I think papa was compelled to leave by the bishop, but whether he himself threw up

the living I do not know, for we came away without any leave-takings in which I might have heard it said, and papa did not tell me. We never played in these close rooms, Eva, as we had done in our dear orchards and sunny fields. Papa was out all day; Johnny and I never went forth, but we would look from the windows at the dirty children playing in the gutters, and watch the many people passing; then we read our few books, and taught you to read, little sister. Johnnie grew thinner and paler every day, and once, when he was too poorly to get up from his bed, I told papa, and asked if a doctor might come and see him. He said it was all nonsense, he was idle, and must be made to get up and work. Several days passed, and Johnnie could not rise. I spoke to papa again, and he said he would see about a doctor; but he went out, and I think forgot all about it; no doctor came, and in a few more days Johnnie died. Eva, it was on another May-day that Johnnie lay dead. Papa was dreadfully grieved then; he called himself the murderer of his child, and I used to fancy sometimes he would go mad. After Johnnie was buried, he used to go out more than ever, and often would not come home until quite the middle of the night. Then he gave up the rooms we lived in when first we came to London, where we had had a little bit of carpet on the floor, and a pot of mignonette in the window, and the kind landlady had called us my dears, and we came to live in this dirty court, up these many flights of stairs."

"Sissy," whispered the little one, "if we die and go to join Johnnie in Heaven, will it be always May, and can we gather bright flowers, and play in the meadows? will there be birds there, and sunshine?"

"I don't know, dear. God has promised to make us quite happy there, to wipe away all tears from our eyes, and that there shall be neither sorrow nor crying."

"And, Sissy, will there be any drunkards there?"

"No, Eva."

"Then what will become of papa?"

Ay, what!

Even now the children huddled together, shivering under the bed-clothes, for they heard his unsteady step on the stair; the clergyman of the Church of England, who once had occupied so good a position in society and his parish, came reeling back from the dens of intoxication, to the miserable home of the

motherless girls, whom want and neglect were fast hurrying to the silent land where there is no more suffering for sin.

TIM'S TEMPERANCE ORATION.—Tim —, the orator, whose speeches were at all times received with delight, had an incorrigible propensity for pronouncing "this," "that," or "the," as if it were spelled "dis," "dat," or "de,"—and this tightening process was applied by him to every word that admitted of its application. After much persuasion, Tim was induced to step into the narrow space left for the speakers. Having bowed to Father Matthew, nodded to the rest, and taken one or two prefatory scratches at his red poll, Tim thus delivered himself:—"Yer riverence, ladies and gintlemen, de dickens a one of me knows how to make a speech at all: so you all must excuse me, if you plaze; but it would be a mane thing in me to be after denyin' de goodness of God: an' sure 'tis I was de boy dat see de two sides of de shillin'—de bad and de good. I've nottin' to boast of in de way of hoight; and dough I say it dat should n't say it, dere were few boys of my inches dat would bate me in hurly or football—dough dat is n't neider here nor dere—but, small as I am, I could put a gallon of porter out of sight wid de best ov 'em; and as for whisky, why 'twas like mudder's milk to me—I'd lap it as de cat laps crame. Ov course, dere ar'nd people standing in de middle ov de road with pints of porter in dere hands, saying, 'Good man, will ye be plazed to drink a drop dis hot day, or dis cold mornin'?' for whether 'tis hot or whether 'tis cowld, 'tis all de same—one drinks to be cowld, and another drinks to be hot—and 'tis mighty cowld it is in de end. No, yer riverence, and ladies and gintlemen, little ye gets for nothing in dis world; and fait 'tis myself had such a druthé upon me, dat 'twas just as if I swallowed a lime-burner's wig. I had n't aise nor pace so long as I was n't turnin' the bottom of a pint or a naggin to the ceilin'; an' so long as I had a fardin' I melted it in drink. Dere are many here dat knows me, an' knows dat I was a good hand at earnin' money; but if one thinks of nottin' but drinkin' de devil a good 'twould do him if he had de bank of Ireland to call his own, an' de banker houldin' on by de raipin' hook up in de moon like Daniel O'Rourke. So you see, ladies, de poor wife soon had n't a fardin'

to bless herself wid, and the childer, the craychers, often went to bed cowld, and me blackguardin' and gladiaterin' about the town, drinkin' here and drinkin' dere, until one 'ud think I'd burst, savin' in yer presence; for de dickens a one ov me knows where I put it all. I was like a puncheon on two legs. Yer riverence, I'm puzzled intirely to understand why one does n't take half nor quarter de tay dat one does ov porter or punch; but if de tay we had here dis evenin' was punch, an' I in de old times, 'tis n't de tay cups, but de big jug dat 'ud be my share dis blessed night. Well, ov course, dis kind of thing could n't go on without bringing me an' de poor wife and childer to sup sorrow. I first drank my own clothes into de pawn—den I drank my wife's cloak off her back—den I drank her flannel petticoat and her gound—den I drank de cups and saucers out of de cupboard—den I drank de plates and dishes off de dresser—den I drank de pot and de kettle off de fire—den I drank de bed-clothes from de bed, and de bed from under myself and me wife—until, de Lord bless us! dere was n't a mortal haporth dat was n't turned into gallons of porter, an' glasses of whisky, and dandies of punch! Well, what brought me to my sineses at last, was de cowld floor, an' de empty belly, and the poor childer crying, 'Daddy, daddy, we're hungry!' I remember de last night ov my black-guardin', dere was n't a bit to ait, nor a sup to taste, for de poor little things; and I tould dem to go to bed, and to hould their whist, an' not bodder me. 'Daddy, daddy, we're hungry,' says de biggest fellow, 'and our mudder did n't ait a bit all day, and she gave all she had to Katty and Billy!' 'Daddy, daddy,' says the littlest of the boys—dat's Billy—'I can't go to sleep, I am so cowld!' 'God forgive your onnateral father!' says I; 'for 'tis he's de purty boy intirely! wid his drinkin' and his blackguardin'. Hold your whist,' says I, 'an' I'll make ye comfortable;' an' wid dat, savin' yer presence, ladies, I takes me breeches—'tis no laughin' matter, I tell ye—an' I goes over to the craychers, an' I sticks one of de childer into one of de legs, and anoder ov de childer into de oder leg, and I buttons de waistband round dere necks, an' I told dem for de life of dem not to dare so much as to sneeze for do rest of de night—and dey did n't, poor childer. But be cockcrow in the mornin', Billy, who

was a mighty airy bird, cried out, ‘Daddy, daddy!’ ‘What’s de matter,’ says I. ‘I want to get up, daddy,’ says he. ‘Well, get up, and bad scran to ye,’ says I. ‘I can’t,’ says de young shaver. ‘Why can’t ye, ye kantankerous cur?’ says I. ‘Me an’ Tommy’s in de breeches,’ says he. ‘Get out of it,’ says I. ‘Daddy, we’re buttoned up,’ says the little fellow, as smart as ye plaze. So I got up and unbuttoned the craychers; and I says to myself, ‘twas a burnin’ shame dat de childer of a Christian, lave ‘lone a heythin, should be buttoned up in breeches, instead ov lying in a dacent bed. So I slipped on de breeches on my own shanks, and off I goes to his riverence, an’ I takes de pledge; and ’twas de crown piece, dat yer riverence, God bless you! slipped into de heel of my fist, dat set me up again in de world. Ladies and gintlemen, me story is tould; and all I have to say is dis, dat I’ve lost de taste for whisky an’ porter, and for dandies of punch too. And dough I don’t be for standin’ trates or takin’ trates, still, an’ all, if a friend comes in de way, he’s welcome as de flowers of May; and, glory be to de Lord, and thanks to his riverence, dere’s a clane place to resave him, an’ a good leg o’ mutton an’ trimmins on de table, and a *cead mille failtha* into the bargain. Dat is what I calls de two sides ov de shillin’—de bad and de good.”

“JUST A LITTLE OUT OF FATHER’S GLASS!”—“Just a little out of father’s glass!” It was Sunday afternoon, and Mr. Woburn, who had always a headache, or a queer sensation about the region of the heart, when he found himself cosily in his arm-chair after dinner, had just mixed a stiff glass of the compound known as “whisky toddy.”

“My dear,” pleaded Mrs. Woburn, “I had rather Paul did not take it! Pray do not tempt him.”

“Nonsense, Helen! he will have to begin it some day, and the chances are ten to one that, if you keep it from him now, he will take all the more by-and-bye, when he is no longer under your control.”

So Mr. Woburn ladled into a smaller glass the usual quantity of what was fast becoming his little son’s favourite mixture, and complacently smiled while the boy, with an air of enjoyment, made the most of it. Meanwhile the mother encouraged her girls to read from the holy book such portions as were suited to their

capacity. It was easy to see that there was, on one point at least, a divided household. Time had been when Helen Woburn had looked on with a smiling face, while her husband took his glass of spirits and water; but of late she had seen enough to make her tremble, lest he should habitually indulge in that which had proved a snare to more than one member of his family. That her husband should ever become intoxicated seemed almost impossible—and yet, had she not seen him inflamed with strong drink, foolish and weak with excess of wine? And was he not ever prompt to argue against the total abstinence which she believed to be his only means of safety? As Mrs. Woburn asked these questions, her eyes filled with tears, and fearing lest her husband should be annoyed by her emotion, she closed her Bible, gave the girls their magazines, and left the room.

"What's the matter with mother?" asked Mr. Woburn, as, taking advantage of her absence, he prepared to mix another glass.

"I must have vexed her," he continued, half in soliloquy. "Hard if I can't give my own boy what I like—aint it, Paul?"

Paul nodded, at the same time holding out his glass for more.

"Why, you toper, I shall have none left for myself!" cried the father. "There, that's all you'll have, mind; and I say, Nell"—this to one of the readers by the window—"here's some sugar for you."

"No, thank you, father," said the child, "I promised mother—"

"Why, you little goose, there can't be more than half a drop of whisky in this, and I know you like sweets"—still holding out the tempting bait—"Come, Nellie, come!"

It was too much. The child, ever wont to obey, rose from her little chair, and came towards her father. At the same moment the door opened, and Mrs. Woburn entered.

Not a word was spoken then; but some two hours later, when the children were walking in the garden before tea, when, too, the effects of the toddy had been slept away, the mother sat down by her husband's side, and reminded him of a promise made some weeks before.

"I was at least to have my way with the girls," was her remonstrance.

"Yes—I know—but a lump of sugar can do no harm."

"Not if it has been soaked in whisky? Not if it makes a child fond of spirits and water?"

"Ridiculous! I tell you *that* wouldn't do it; and if it would—where's the harm? Am I any the worse because I like a cheerful glass?"

"I have seen you the worse for it, Harry, you know I have!"

Mr. Woburn turned away his head.

"I do n't wish to grieve you," resumed the mother, "but I must try to save my children from this love of drink. You have given me leave to train the girls to do without it, may I not have the boy too?"

Mr. Woburn hesitated. "I do n't see what good can come of it," said he, at last, "for he *must* begin sometime."

"Why *must*?"

"Oh, because boys are so different to girls, and—and—" here the poor man stammered not a little—"in fact, Helen, I—I'll think about it." And with this promise he contrived to postpone the debate, as he called it, to another sitting.

Mrs. Woburn did not go out that Sunday evening. Under the pressure of domestic anxieties her health had become less vigorous than of old, and her physician strongly objected to her being out after tea. But her husband took all the children, except little Nellie, to the house of God, and did his best to appear religious, chiefly, alas! because it was not considered "respectable" to be otherwise. Many years had passed since this man seriously desired to be a Christian. He had been awakened at the time of his wife's conversion, but he had since become cold and careless, and—to a greater extent than even Helen supposed—the slave of the intoxicating cup. Still Henry Woburn was far from desiring to see little Paul follow in his father's steps. He would rather have cut off his right hand than make this child an habitual drunkard; but he would not admit that there was danger in just giving him a little "out of father's glass."

"Just a little!" Ah, how many times has this been spoken by misguided men and women who, having themselves a craving appetite for the dangerous draught, find a foolish—I had almost said a wicked—gratification in arousing the same taste, where, as yet, it has no existence! Better far had it been for many a father, had his boy fallen dead at his feet, instead of sipping day after day from the alluring cup, and becoming thus, even in child-

hood, a fond lover of strong drink ; for in the vast majority of cases, it is the habit, early formed, of what is called "moderate drinking," that leads to drunkenness. O ye fathers, who now sweeten the spoonful of wine or spirits, so as to entice the rosy lips to love it, beware lest you do that which, too late, you would die to *undo* ! Keep on the safe side, if you would be clear at the last great day from the blood of these little ones, of whose early life the great God has made you *stewards*.

Years went by—and Mrs. Woburn's children, scattered far and wide, the scene which I have described was almost forgotten. Not so, however, was it with the father, albeit he was now living, with new business cares, in a town some three hundred miles from Helen's tomb. He had reason, unhappy man ! to remember it, for the news which came to him concerning Paul—now a young man able, but unhappily by no means *willing* to support himself—was worse than sad. Paul had grown up to be, as his mother had feared, a fond lover of alcoholic drink, and this vice had in three years cost him twice as many situations, and reduced him to a condition of poverty and disease too painful to be described at length. Weary as he was of sending money and clothing to be wasted and exchanged for drink, Mr. Woburn was yet afraid to discontinue his supplies, not knowing but that some desperate step might follow. It was, therefore, with a feeling of relief that he one day received a letter from Paul himself, informing him that he had been compelled to go into the hospital, and was likely to remain there for many weeks. But the next post informed him that a sudden change had taken place, and that if Paul's father wished to see his son before he died, he must come at once to London.

Setting out immediately, the unhappy father entered London late at night. On reaching the hospital, he was at once admitted, and with him, a Christian minister who had known and highly esteemed the poor boy's mother. Paul was conscious, and fully aware that his hours on earth were numbered—willing, too, to acknowledge that he had sinned. But in Christ as the Saviour of sinners, he believed for others, not for himself.

"My dear mother," he said, "is safe ; and *you*, sir," to the minister ; "but I have gone too far. Do you know that drunkenness leads a man into almost every sin ? If I had not liked the taste of drink as I did, I should not have been dying here like this!"

"But," said his visitor, "even for *you* salvation is possible through Christ." And again he declared the truth as it is in Jesus.

"Well, it may be so, but it does not seem likely, and my heart is so hard with sin. If you would not mind praying a little —"

They knelt down beside his bed, and the poor boy joined his hands together, as he had been wont to join them on his mother's knee—in the time which his father would have given his life to recall from the past. Either this action, or the prayer itself, made them both think of *her* earnest cries to Heaven in their behalf.

"Do you believe," asked Paul, in the faint whisper which was all his strength allowed,—"Do you think I should know her, if I *did* go to heaven?"

"I cannot doubt it."

"What is that text about the chief of sinners?—it was one *she* taught me."

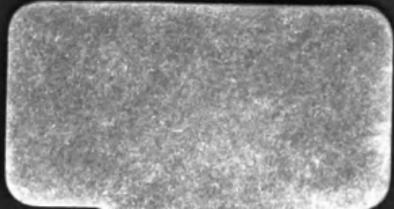
"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief."

"That last part, at least, belongs to me!" said the dying youth, with painful energy. "Drunkard, gambler, swearer, Sabbath-breaker, self-destroyer. What have I *not* been?"

And this was he who, scarcely fifteen years before, had been a child at his mother's knee! Can you wonder that, as the father heard these words, he turned aside to curse his own headstrong folly; or that when, two hours later, all was over, he said in the bitterness of his soul, "God may forgive me, but *I shall never forgive myself!*"

Hidden within his heart from that time forth, this terrible grief must have brought his grey hairs down with sorrow to the grave, had he not fondly cherished hope concerning that death-bed awakening which had come—how he loved the very thought!—in answer to a mother's prayers. Whether or not the departing soul believed in Christ, is a question which we cannot decide; but one thing is certain, for every drunkard who *does* repent on the bed of death, *more than a hundred* perish in their sin. Who shall say that space for repentance will be given to this man and to that? Or who, having time, can be sure of so using it as to secure his soul's salvation? Surely the lesson of such a scene is one of warning, saying forcibly of the drunkard's path, as of every other evil thing, "Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away!"

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